GLEANINGS FROM THE PSALMS

Ellet J. Waggoner

Intro: The Shepherd Boy

Although the Scriptures give a very full account of David's life, but little is told us of his early days. We know, however, that these were spent at Bethlehem, and he is first brought before us as a shepherd, minding his father's sheep.

Bethlehem was a small town, built on one of the highest hills in Palestine, about four miles to the south of Jerusalem. Its name signifies "The House of Bread," and was probably bestowed on it on account of the fertility of the surrounding country. Even at the present time, visitors to the place report that fruit trees and vineyards abound, and that the neighborhood of Bethlehem is not surpassed by any in Palestine for luxuriance and beauty.

It was an ancient city in David's time. The patriarch Jacob had sojourned there in his wanderings and it was near by that Rachel had died and was buried. The monument erected by Jacob to the memory of his beloved wife was still standing. It was in Bethlehem, too, that David's great grand-parents, Ruth and Boaz, had their homes; and it was there, a thousand years later, that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was manifested in sinful flesh to save His people from their sins. "But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel." (Micah 5:2)

Jesse, David's father, was counted a very old man. He had eight sons, of whom David was the youngest, and two daughters, both of whom had children of their own. These, although David's nephews, were about the same age as himself. They were doubtless among his youthful companions, and we can imagine how, as they minded their sheep together, or practiced with their slings, they would talk of what they hoped to do when they grew to be men.

It is not likely, however, that they anticipated becoming so famous as they afterwards did. One of them became a great king, and all grew up to be famous warriors. Joab, the great general and statesman, brave but crafty and unscrupulous; Abishai, the mighty men of valor; Asahel, "as light of foot as a wild roe;" (2 Samuel 2:18) and Amasa, who afterwards commanded the

army of Absalom and was slain by Joab in treachery, were among these nephews of David. Then there was Elhanan who became one of the chief mighty men of Israel. He also lived at Bethlehem.

It must have been a cause of sadness to David in after life to know that so many of the playmates of his youth should destroy one another, and to find them siding with his enemies against him. It was an experience of this kind that made him write the 41st Psalm. "Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9)

David was not only a shepherd boy, able to run races with the fleet-footed Asahel, and to sling stones like Joab and the others, but was also a musician and a poet. As he listened to the voice of Nature, speaking all around him, and thought upon the Word of God, he sang psalms to his Maker, and made sweet music on the harp. He had carefully stored up the instruction received from his father Jesse, Samuel the prophet, and other good men, and had hidden the words of God in his heart that he might not sin against Him.

We do not know whether any of the Psalms contained in the Bible were written by David at this time, but it is very likely that some of them were, and even if they were written in after years, we know that the thoughts in them came to him in those early shepherd days. It was then he had the blessed experience of which he sang in the 32nd Psalm: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. ... I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:1-2,5)

The shepherd's work was not done at sunset. The sheep had to be guarded from the attacks of hungry wild beasts, or these would come and destroy the flock, so that David sometimes had to remain out at night, and watch the sheepfold. It was not always pleasant, but instead of complaining, he composed verses on the beauties of the star-lit heavens. The 8th Psalm was one of the songs he wrote on this subject. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is

your name in all the earth! who has set your glory above the heavens. ... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man, that You are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:1,3-4)

David knew that although he was young and simple, the Lord could reveal in him the same glory that made the heavens beautiful, and so we find these words in the same psalm: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You established strength." (Psalm 8:2,RV)

When Jesus reminded the Jews of these words He said, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise;" (Matthew 21:16) so that when God was doing this with David, He was "establishing strength" in him. That this was a real strength was seen in David's case. More than once while he was guarding the sheep at night, fierce beasts came prowling round, and on one occasion a lion, emboldened by hunger, seized one of the lambs, and was dragging it away.

David might have thought of the great danger he would run by interfering with the lion, and perhaps reason that he could not hope to save the lamb, and his own life was more precious. But no, he had the true shepherd heart. He loved his sheep, and his only thought was that the lamb was in danger and must be rescued. Besides, God was his strength, and even though the lion was much stronger than himself, God was stronger still.

So he went in God's strength to do his duty, taking only a shepherd's staff. He overtook the lion and struck it until it dropped the lamb and turned on David. Then it was seen that God really girded him with strength, (Psalm 18:39) for in spite of its superior strength the lion was slain. Another time a bear attacked the fold, but David pursued it and fought it with the same result. He must have had this in mind when he wrote the 17th Psalm. "He is like a lion that is greedy of prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Arise, O Lord. Confront him, cast him down: Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword; From men, by your hand, O Lord." (Psalm 17:12-14,RV)

In after years when crafty enemies were about him, trying to lure him into wrong paths that he might fall into evil and be ruined, he remembered how the Lord had upheld him as he climbed from crag to crag of the limestone rocks of Bethlehem, making him sure-footed and keeping him from falling. So when he was at last delivered from the persecutions of Saul, he sang in the 18th Psalm: "He makes my feet like hind's feet: and sets me upon my high places. ... Your right hand has held me up, and your gentleness has made me great. You have enlarged my steps under me, and my feet have not slipped." (Psalm 18:33,35-36)

David knew what it was to be tired and hungry and thirsty. In the hot summer days how he liked to lead the flock to the well which was by the gate of Bethlehem, where they could quench their thirst with the clear, cold water. Many years after, when the Philistines invaded the land, and had taken possession of Bethlehem, David and his men were in a fortress not far off. They ran short of water, and David could not help thinking of the cool, delicious draughts he used to get at the old well. "And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me a drink of the water of the well Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (2 Samuel 23:15)

When some of his mighty man heard that, three of them went down to Bethlehem, broke through the Philistine host, drew water at the well and brought it back to David. He did not like to drink water that had been procured at such a risk, so he poured it out as an offering to the Lord. We learn from the incident, however, how highly he had learned to prize the well in his earlier life, and this helps us to appreciate more fully the words of the 63rd Psalm, which he wrote at the time just referred to: "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and weary land, where no water is." (Psalm 63:1)

In all the experiences of his life the youthful shepherd learned to see the working of God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses also, had tended sheep, and as David studied the records of the past, he saw how all men were like sheep, and God was a great Shepherd, feeding and guiding His flock, and leading them to the fountain of the water of life. So he sang in the 95th Psalm: "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord

our Maker: For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." (Psalm 95:6-7,RV)

He knew how the very helplessness of the sheep appealed to his own heart, and how carefully he sought to lead them where the pasturage was best and the way was easiest. So the Lord was guiding him, only with infinitely greater love and wisdom, and the joyful realization of this thought found expression in the beautiful "Shepherd Psalm," which has gladdened the heart of every believer who has read it, and will continue to inspire rejoicing till we all enter the heavenly fold. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. ... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:1-2,4)

So the shepherd boy was learning the ways of the Lord. By faithfulness in the discharge of the duties allotted to him, he was developing a character that God could use anywhere. One who does everything to the glory of God, even if it be only minding sheep, is achieving true and lasting greatness, and as we follow the history of God's dealings with him, we shall see how. "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds: From following the ewes that give suck He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance." (Psalm 78:70-71)--Present Truth, May 5, 1898--1 Samuel 16 (David's early life).

Chapter 1

Psalm 1: Evergreen Christians

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night. And 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." (Psalm 1:1-3)

The secret of this prosperity is meditation in the law of God. To meditate in the law of God day and night is not simply to have certain fixed hours for devotion, nor is it simply to desire greatly to get away from business, in order to think.

Meditation, at least in the sense that it is here used, does not necessarily imply solitude. It is certain that it does not here, for the meditation is to be continued day and night; and God does not want men to be hermits. The life of a monk does not furnish the best opportunities for holiness, as many have testified from experience.

One great reason why is that those who shun the society of their fellow-men are shirking duty that God has laid upon them. If a man has light, he is to let it shine to the glory of God.

It is the very essence of selfishness for a man to go off and live by himself in some solitary place, in order that he may perfect holiness, and not be contaminated by evil companionship; and such a one always reaps the reward of his selfishness, in that he has the worst possible constant companion. No man can get away from himself by going into the woods to live.

Meditation is not communion with self. The person who thinks about himself very much will not make advancement in the Christian life. There is only one to whom the Christian should look, and that is Jesus. When a

person shuts himself up to himself, he is apt to exclude everything else. While secret devotion and meditation are necessary, if one's meditation is confined to his hours of privacy, he will not grow as a tree. David furnishes a good commentary upon his own words in this psalm when he says: "Princes also did sit and speak against me; but your servant did meditate in your statutes." (Psalm 119:23)

Ridicule and abuse could not affect such a man, for he would be deaf to it. His mind is absorbed in something else.

Meditation in the law does not mean simply thinking about the words of the ten commandments. There is more to the law of God than what appears on the surface. The law is spiritual. That person alone properly meditates in it whose eyes have been opened to behold wondrous things in it, and who has hid it in his heart. His sole thought is, "How can I live to the glory of God?"

He binds the law upon his hand and his head, as well as in his heart, so that his thoughts and his acts will naturally grow out of it. The one question that he will ask is, "Is this right? Will it be pleasing to God?"

And the law of God in all its breadth, as exhibited in the life of Christ, will be that to which he will look for an answer. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." (Psalm 1:3)

The word here rendered “rivers” is not the ordinary word for river. It is a word that signifies division, and seems to refer, not to a river itself, but to the different streams into which a river is divided for irrigating purposes. “Canals of water” would more properly express the idea. It is not simply a tree on the bank of a river, but a fruit-tree in a thoroughly watered soil. Those who have seen the luxuriance of vegetation in a country where irrigation is carried on, can better understand the figure. "He shall be like a tree." (Psalm 1:3)

Constant growth is one of the characteristics of a tree. If it lives a thousand years, it grows every year. Each year of its life will see a circle

added to it. It does not lose this year all that it gained last year, but it keeps all that it gains, and adds more. Only such growth as that is Christian growth. The true Christian life is continual advancement. Says the psalmist, of those who at last will appear in Zion before God, "They go from strength to strength." (Psalm 84:7)

Nothing else can be represented by the word "growth." A tree draws its nourishment from hidden sources. Its roots strike down deep into the earth, to take nourishment; all out of sight are the processes of growth, but the foliage and the fruit are open to all beholders. So the Christian whose abundant fruit glorifies God is the one whose life is hid with Christ in God.

The promise is that if we pray to God in secret, "your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6)

Men may not know the petitions that are put up to God in secret, they may not know the agonizing cry of the heart and the flesh for the living God, that strong temptation may be resisted, even while the individual is mingling with others in the discharge of his duty; they can see only the fruit that is borne; we cannot see the tree grow--we see only the result of its growing. "His leaf also shall not wither." (Psalm 1:3)

Many professors are like the grain that fell where there was not much earth; it sprang up quickly, but as soon as the heat came it withered. They are full of zeal for a time, but when actual conflicts come, they become discouraged. But the true Christian doesn't wither. No matter how fiercely the sun beats down on the tree that stands in irrigated soil, its leaves are always green. Its roots take up moisture continually.

So the one in whose heart is the law of God, who delights in it, and meditates in it, has a source of continual freshness. He feeds upon the living word, and grows thereby. This is the only source of growth. The one who depends on feeling and impulse may make a fair show for a time, but only the one who feeds upon Christ and his words, which are spirit and life, can continue to grow. "Whatsoever he does shall prosper." (Psalm 1:3)

Because he will do nothing that the law of the Lord does not prompt. The beauty of the Lord will be upon him, to establish the work of his hands upon him.

How much energy is wasted in this life! How many efforts fail, simply because they are misdirected! But he whose strength is in God will not labor in vain. Such shall be called "trees of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:3)

That is, their righteousness will be increasing with steady growth, as does a tree; and being the planting of the Lord, they will bring forth fruit, and God will be glorified in their lives.--Signs of the Times, March 18, 1889--Psalm 1:1-3.

Chapter 2

Psalm 1: Passive Wickedness

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." (Psalm 1:1)

It is not enough not to be a scoffer or a blasphemer; we must not occupy the place of such. The Christian must not even silently occupy a position among ungodly and scornful men, which might lead others to suppose him to belong to those classes.

There are two obvious reasons for this. One is on account of the influence upon others, and the other is the influence on one's self. One cannot sit in the seat of the scornful without being influenced by what he hears. "Be not deceived: evil company corrupts good manners [or, better rendered, "good morals"]." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

It is not enough not to be passively wicked; for that is to be positively wicked. What the Lord desires is positive goodness.--Present Truth, November 25, 1897--Psalm 1:1.

Chapter 3

Psalm 1: Meditation

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night." (Psalm 1:2)

This is something that is very much neglected, to the detriment of the individual soul, and of society as well.

It is common for people to allow the press of work in business to crowd out meditation; they think they "have no time for it." That is a short-sighted policy; they might as well say that they have no time to eat.

It is the man who meditates, not merely occasionally, but "day and night," who has prosperity in whatever he undertakes.

Christians are in danger of adopting the world's methods, and the world's standard of success. Real success is not always by any means that which is described by the highest figures.--Present Truth, August 21, 1902--Psalm 1:2.

Chapter 4

Psalm 1: Planted by the Waters

The 1st Psalm tells us that the man who meditates on the law of God day and night, and who delights in it, shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. You can all go into the gardening business, even in your houses, where you can watch the plant growing, and see how it grows by the water.

You will be surprised how much education you can get out of seeing a single plant grow. Take some beans, some peas, some wheat, or some Indian corn, and put it in a moist place where it is reasonably warm. In two or three days it will sprout. Then take a glass jar or a tumblerful of water and tie over the top if it a little thin cloth, like cheese-cloth, that is not too close in its meshes, and lay the seeds on that, and then keep it moist. Through the scent of water that is below it, it will grow. It will send its stock upward, and its roots downward.

It is really wonderful to see the intelligence displayed, to see how methodically and how regularly that plant goes about its business of growing. You may find--you certainly will, if you have a lot of seeds together--that in some of the seeds the root end of the sprout will be uppermost, and the stalk end will be below, so that it must go down; and yet the root, that must supply the stalk with nourishment, and which can get it only in liquid form, will turn, and will invariably go downward to find the water; and the stalk will turn, and go upward.

Add then, if you should have it in soil, and let it be in dry soil, and the moisture is upon one side only, you will find that those rootlets will make no mistake. They do not make any experiments, either; but, just as true and as certain as the needle will point to the pole, they will go directly to where the water is, and they will not go over the other way.

With this in mind, read the 1st Psalm. He that meditates on the law of God day and night "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." (Psalm 1:3)

That is, he will not be making experiments, and he will not be making mistakes. There is instruction in the Bible that will direct the man in the right way all the time.--Present Truth, May 21, 1903--Psalm 1:3.

Chapter 5

Psalm 2: A Lesson for All Time

In this psalm we have questions and answers and exhortations. They are applicable at all times, but most especially at the present time, as we shall see. The psalm begins, with the question, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" (Psalm 2:1)

The word "heathen" is the same as "nations." Among men the word "heathen" is usually considered as synonymous with "uncivilized;" but the Bible calls all men heathen who do not serve the Lord, no matter how much they may have of the veneer and polish of what is called civilization. It will be noticed that in the margin we have "tumultuously assemble" as the equivalent of "rage."

Plotting Against the Lord

What is the cause of the tumultuous gatherings of the people? and what is the vain thing which they imagine. The second and third verses give the answer: "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." (Psalm 2:2-3)

The reader will see by looking at John 1:41 and margin, that the word, "Anointed" and "Christ" are the same. Therefore we may read, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Christ."

This is quoted in: "Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ." (Acts 4:25-26)

The Father and the Son are inseparable. It is impossible to speak against one without opposing the other. It is impossible that there should be such a

thing as believing in God but not in Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6)

They are one in redemption, as they are one in creation. Notice well that the bands and cords of both are the same. Some people like to persuade themselves that in casting away the law of the Lord they are following Christ. They try to believe that Christ came for the purpose of loosing men from their obligation to keep the law of God. That is a part of the "vain thing" which the people imagine. He who seeks to cast off the law of the Lord, is rejecting the yoke of Christ. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30)

The law of God is the law of Christ.

Rejecting God's Love

What is there about the law of God that should cause men to try to shake it off? Is it a burdensome yoke? Not by any means. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Now see how perfectly this agrees with what is said of the law: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3) "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

Instead of being a burdensome yoke, the law of God in Christ gives peace and rest. It is a comfort. "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:23) "Great peace have they which love your law; and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165)

Since the law of God is love, it is evident that those who seek to cast away God's bands and cords, are rejecting His love. "The Lord has appeared

of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Christ is He by whom men are drawn, (John 12:32) because in Him is God's law of love. To reject the law of God is to reject Christ.

Everlasting Cords

It is indeed possible for men to cast away from them the loving bands of God's law; but can they break from them asunder? Never. "The works of His hands are verity and judgment; all His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." (Psalm 111:7-8) "For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89)

Therefore, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

The cords with which God draws men are the cords of love, or His law, and this love is everlasting; consequently those cords are everlasting. Men may shake them off, but it is a "vain thing" to think of breaking them. Men fancy that they have done away the law, when they have only made it void in their own hearts. They think that the law of God has changed, when it is only they who have changed.

The Papacy, "the man of sin," (2 Thessalonians 2:3) has boasted great things against God, setting itself forth in the place of God; but yet the prophecy says that at its greatest it can only "think to change times and laws." (Daniel 7:25)

It can go no farther than the thought; it can accomplish nothing except vainly to persuade itself and its dupes that it has the power. The law of God is "like the great mountains." (Psalm 36:6)

Far better might puny man think to level the Alps or the Himalayas with a pickaxe and spade, than to overthrow the law of God.

Opposition to God

There is no nation on earth that has not set itself in opposition against God. No argument will be needed to establish this statement so far as it concerns what are called "heathen nations." But what about the so-called "Christian nations"? They have done the same thing. Following the lead of the Papacy, they have every one enjoined the observance of the first day of the week in direct opposition to God's law, which commands the observance of the seventh day.

Let a man who is in court to answer for working on Sunday quote the fourth commandment, and he will be told that the court does not recognize that, and that the law of the land must be enforced, no matter what the Bible says. Thus men exalt themselves above God.

In setting aside the Sabbath of the Lord for the Sunday of Pope and pagan, governments today as really set themselves against Christ as did "Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel." (Acts 4:27)

A Laughable Farce

How does the Lord regard these attempts upon His law? Here is the answer: "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 2:4)

It is well known that ants have means of communicating among themselves, and that they have a form of government, and doubtless as perfect for them as human government is for men. Suppose now that we were able to understand their language, and should overhear them plotting to overthrow the English Government, and all other governments. Would there not be a peal of laughter that would sound throughout the earth? The idea is too ridiculous for consideration. But the difference between ants and men is not nearly so great as that between men and God. "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him as less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

No wonder that God laughs at the "great swelling words of vanity" (2 Peter 2:18) that men speak. Men may rage and storm, but the Government of God is in no danger. Every attack upon it will only recoil upon the misguided men who make it.

It is forgetfulness or ignorance of this fact that causes people sometimes to manifest so much zeal in defending the Lord's cause. Many laws have been made by man for the purpose of "protecting" the religion of Jesus Christ. If those men had known the Lord, they would rather have sought His protection for themselves. No wonder that every such law, however conscientiously made, has been a miserable failure. Since it was uncalled for, it was only in the way.

The attempts of men to prop up the Government of God are as ridiculous, even if they be not as wicked, as the attempts of men to overthrow it. They show that men vainly imagine themselves to be more powerful than God, and that He is dependent upon them. When God laughs at human designs against His Government, we need not be alarmed for its safety. Our only anxiety should be to seek, and to induce others to seek, its protection.

Troubling the Wicked

What will God do to those wicked plotters? "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." (Psalm 2:5)

In the margin we have "trouble" as the alternative of "vex." Notice that it requires only a word from the Lord to throw men into confusion. It is not necessary that He even speak; a look is sufficient. When the hosts of Pharaoh were pursuing Israel through the Red Sea, "It came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." (Exodus 14:24)

We can trust the Lord to defend and protect His own cause and His own people.

A Royal Decree

In the face of all the plots against His Government, the Lord says, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm 2:6)

More literally we may read it as indicated in the margin, "Yet have I anointed my King upon Zion, the hill of my holiness."

Men may think to break asunder the bands of the Lord and His Anointed, but nevertheless the proclamation of Christ as King is calmly made in the face of it. And when Christ has thus been proclaimed King, what will be the result? Here is the announcement which Christ makes, to prove His right to reign: "I will declare the decree; the Lord has said unto me, You are mySon; this day have I begotten You. Ask of me, and I shall give You the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." (Psalm 2:7-8) "The government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shallbe called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His Government and peace there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

God's Everlasting Kingdom

Let it not be forgotten that only "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7)

It is not done by any human agency. It is the Lord God, and not man, who gives to Christ the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth. When the nations are given to Christ, together with the whole earth, for what purpose is it? He himself tells us, and the remainder of the decree which God issued to Him: "You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:9)

In the 2nd chapter of Daniel the nations of earth are represented as an image composed of various metals. The kingdom of Christ is represented as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, with the following results:

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:35)

That image represented the nations of earth until the end of time:

• The head of gold represent Babylon, which passed away hundreds of years before the first advent of Christ.

• The breast and arms of silver, representing Medo-Persia, long since ceased to figure in the affairs of the world.

• The brass, representing Grecia, crumbled to pieces under the iron monarchy of Rome;

• And the Roman world itself, represented by the legs of iron, went into a decline soon after one of its governors hearkened to the wicked counsels of the people, and crucified the Lord of glory.

Then it became divided, retaining some of the strength of the iron, but incapable of united action, and in that condition it has been for about fourteen hundred years. That is a long time as men count, but not long enough for God to forget. We are living in the days when we must expect as the next great event the smiting of the nations, and their utter destruction by the Lord.

An Exhortation

In view of all this, how important the exhortation, "Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath will soon be kindled." (Psalm 2:10-12)

In this last we have given the literal rendering, as in the Revision. Very soon will the wrath of the Lord be kindled. How are the kings and judges of the earth to kiss, or acknowledge allegiance to, the Son, and thus escape His wrath? Manifestly by obeying His commands. Certainly not by presumptuously passing laws designed to "protect" Him and His cause. The Lord asked for their submission, not for their support. This is shown by the closing words of this psalm: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2:12)

Instead of thinking to uphold the Government of God, men, even though they be kings, are to seek His protection for themselves. This will not be done by their passing laws defining how other people shall worship God, but by their personally obeying the laws that God himself has made for the guidance of all men, both high and low.

When the time comes that the Lord takes possession of His inheritance, and begins to reign, and "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich man, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," (Revelation 6:15) flee to hide themselves in the dens and caves of the earth, saying to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," (Revelation 6:16) each one will be acting only for himself. Even so they must act only for themselves in serving God, if they will yield to Him. No man, even though he be king or judge, can serve God for another. Each individual, however high or low, is called upon to render personal obedience.

The thing that God calls upon men to do is to cease fighting against Him. That message, "Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth," (Psalm 2:10) is one which the servants of God are now to bear. "Before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," (Revelation 10:11) the message is to go. It is not a message of denunciation, but of entreaty. Every nation of earth has set itself up against God, and successive rulers and judges have accepted as a matter of course what has been done by their predecessors, and have acted on the same plan. Not all are by any means knowingly guilty of opposition to God. Therefore they are to

be shown what is the real power of God, that they may have opportunity to yield to it.

It is natural for men to make much of the fact that cruel persecution results from the laws that have been made to supply a supposed deficiency in the Government of God. But that evil, although great, is only secondary. The primary and the chief evil is the opposition to God's law. If they would deal fairly with God, no injustice could possibly result to men.

And the burden of those who love the Lord will ever be, not that they are oppressed, but that God is dishonored, and that those who are dishonoring Him are in danger in their own souls. The evil with its consequences is to be faithfully set before them, together with the invitation and assurance, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusts in Him." (Psalm 34:8)--Present Truth, May 2, 1895--Original title: The Second Psalm--Psalm 2:1-12.

Chapter 6

Psalm 2: The Enthronement of Christ

A minister speaking at a large gathering of ministers and Christian workers, recently said that the work of the Free Churches was "nothing else than to enthrone the Lord Christ."

This is a very common statement. The idea that they have, to place Christ on His throne, seems to have quite taken possession of the large number of Christian workers, and it is this idea that is leading them to seek a controlling influence in politics. But no graver mistake could be made. God says: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm 2:6)

And this He does, not by the help of man, but in spite of the opposition of kings and rulers. Yes, Christ shall yet be King over all the earth. "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice form henceforth even for ever." (Isaiah 9:7)

But mark this fact: "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7)

God asks no help of man to make Christ King. He will be King whether they wish it or not. All He asks of any man or of all men, is to acknowledge Him as ruler, and to submit to Him.--Present Truth, April 14, 1897--Psalm 2:6.

Chapter 7

Psalm 3: Thoughts

This psalm is said to be "a psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." There is no reason to suppose that this inscription is not correct. Whether it was written during the flight, or was written afterwards, as expressing the feelings which he had on that occasion, is immaterial.

Knowing the circumstances which called for this psalm we can enter more fully into the feelings of the psalmist. Those circumstances we find recorded in detail in 2 Samuel chapters 15, 16, 17. With the incidents therein related fresh in our minds, let us examine the psalm, and see what there is in it which is profitable for us. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

vs. 1: Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

The same language may be used by every one who professes to follow Christ. To every one the warning is given, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he made devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

He is at the head of a host, so that we have, as the apostle says, to contend "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

Moreover, Christians are informed that in the world they shall have tribulation; Satan is the "god of this world," and since he is the enemy of all righteousness we would naturally expect that the world would not be friendly to the Christian. So we read, "If you were of the world, the world would love its his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19)

It is often said that the world is now becoming friendly to Christians and Christianity. To this we would simply repeat the text above quoted, and

others of a similar nature. The world persecuted Christ, and he says: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me." (John 15:20-21)

James wrote, as a truth for all times, that "The friendship of the world is enmity with God, whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4)

When, therefore, we hear men speak of Christians whom the world loves, we must conclude that their Christianity is worldliness; that instead of being followers of God, they are enemies. Besides the devil and the world, each one has his own self, the worst enemy of all, to contend against. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7) "For the flesh lusts again this Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17)

Surely we may well say, as did David, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me." (Psalm 3:1)

vs. 2: Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.

David's enemies thought that his overthrow was complete. One of them said, tauntingly, "The Lord has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son; and, behold, you are taken in mischief because you are a bloody man." (2 Samuel 16:8)

Even so the world, looking at the faults of Christians, will say, "They are no better than others; they do things that are just as bad as the things that we do; there is no more hope for them than for us."

And the Christian himself, who, more than anyone else, has a vivid sense of his own shortcomings, too often gives way to the same desponding

thoughts. How often people say: "I have so many sins to overcome, and am so weak, that it doesn't seem of much use for me to try."

What is this but saying of one's own soul, "There is no help for him in God"?

Notice the use of the word "soul," in this verse. Some imagine that the terms soul invariably refers to an "immaterial substance," to something which has unending existence, yet which is not an entity. But David, speaking of those who were seeking his life, said, "Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." (Psalm 3:2)

vs. 3: But you, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of a my head.

vs. 4: I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill.

No portion of the Scriptures was written without a purpose. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have a hope." (Romans 15:4)

When we read in the Old Testament, how wonderfully God delivered his people in time of battle, it is that we may take courage. Not that we are to engage in physical warfare, in which God will fight for us, but that we may know God's power to help all who are in trouble.

In the 20th chapter of 2 Chronicles we find an interesting account of the deliverance of the Jews, from their enemies, who greatly outnumbered them. This was done because the people believed and trusted in the Lord.

The case of Gideon and his army (Judges 6 and 7) is a similar one. These were visible proofs of God's power to deliver, and serve to give us confidence in such promises as the following: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him." (Nahum 1:7) "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted

above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

vs. 5: I laid me down and slept; I awoke; for the Lord sustained me.

This verse shows God's continual care for His people. How many of us are there who remember as they arise in the morning that, "It is of Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." (Lamentations 3:22)

And that, "They our new every morning." (Lamentations 3:23)

The adversary of souls would destroy us. As a roaring lion he walks about, seeking whom he may devour, and this he would do with us physically as well as spiritually; for if he could cut short our lives, while we are unprepared for the Judgment, he would thereby most effectually devour us, and bring us to eternal ruin. That he does not do this, is because of the continual watchfulness of God. "Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:4)

It is remarkable that when driven from his throne by traitors, who cared for nothing but to take his life, David could peacefully lie down and sleep. The source of this peace is found in: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You; because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:3-4)

Having one's mind stayed on God is equivalent to delighting in and obeying his law, (Psalm 1:1-3) as we read, "O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of sea." (Isaiah 48:18)

The Bible abounds in statements concerning the peace and blessedness of those who obey God. But it will be objected that David had not kept the law, and that his present distress was the direct consequence of his sins. That is true, and this is why many said of his soul that there was no help for him in God.

We are often tempted, as before stated, to say the same thing of ourselves, when for some cause we are brought to a vivid sense of our sinfulness. In such times we forget, what David remembered, that although no man could stand before God if he were unable to answer for his conduct, there is forgiveness effectual, that he may be feared. "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Psalm 130:3-4)

David had sinned, but he had repented, and believing God's promise, (See Isaiah 55:7) he could rest as peacefully as though he had never committed a sin. Why should we not thus rise above the temptations of the enemy? Paul says: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." (Romans 8:31-33)

With these texts before us, but we need not wonder at David's boldness, as indicated in:

vs. 6: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me roundabout.

There are two reasons why people may not fear an invading army:

1. Because they are in league with the enemy, or intend to yield without resistance.

2. Because they are strongly fortified and protected, and are confident that with the help which they have they can make a successful resistance.

David's boldness was of the second class. Many persons think it an indication of virtue to invite temptation, that they may show how they can resist it. In the case before us we see that boldness is not always inconsistent with flight. David was fleeing from his pursuers, yet he felt fearless in the

Lord. So we, while we are to resist the devil, that he may flee from us, are not to seek opportunities to resist him. Our prayer is to be, "Lead us not into temptation." (Matthew 6:13)

We are to shun the place of evil, but when the enemy comes to us, we are to vigorously resist him. We may be sure that he will not allow us to lack of opportunities to put forth all the strength he can muster.

In the seventh verse David states as already accomplished, what the Lord will do for all his people. He will save them, and discomfit their enemies. Comparing the enemies to ravenous beasts, who would be disabled by having their teeth broken, he says,

vs 7: You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.

The psalm then appropriately closes with an acknowledgment of God as the author of both present and future, complete salvation:

vs. 8: Salvation belongs unto [or, it is of] the Lord; your blessing is upon your people.--Signs of the Times, June 18, 1885--Original title: Thoughts on the Third Psalm--Psalm 3:1-8.

Chapter 8

Psalm 5: Words and Thoughts

The psalmist prayed, "Give ear to my words, O Lord; and consider my meditation." (Psalm 5:1)

How few there are who could from the heart make that request? Who would like to have the Lord listen to all that they say? Certainly not they who blaspheme, or who use vulgar, idle, or foolish words, which they would not want even a good man to hear.

Yet whether we wish God to hear our words, or not, we may rest assured that He does consider them, for, says the psalmist, "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, you know it altogether." (Psalm 124:1)

And those words are recorded, for the Saviour says: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned." (Matthew 12:36-37)

Then there is our meditation. That is worse still, for every heart has cherished thoughts that have never been formed into words, because the individual would not betray his real character to his associates. It is the thoughts which mark the measure and character of the man. "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7)

Many people who pass for upright Christians, would be seen to be wholly corrupt, if their thoughts were but laid open to public view. Well, whether we pray that God will consider our meditation or not, we may rest assured that He does do so, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:12-13)

The heart or mind of man is to the Lord like a printed page. He knows all its imaginings. And the time is coming when not only the Lord, but all the world, will be able to read the secrets of the heart. The apostle says that when the Lord comes He will "bring to light the hidden thing of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

That will be the time when he who now is lifted up shall be terribly abased. Who is the one, then, who can ask the Lord to consider his meditation, and who will not be put to shame in the Judgment?

• It is he whose delight is in the law of the Lord, in which he meditates day and night.

• It is he whose works are committed to the Lord, and whose thoughts are consequently established.

• It is he who is pure in heart.

What a blessed condition does that man occupy, who can rejoice in the thought that the pure and holy God knows all his thoughts and approves them. Our daily prayer should be: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)--Signs of the Times, May 19, 1887--Psalm 5:1.

Chapter 9

Psalm 5: Confidence Toward God

"My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct my prayer unto You, and will look up." (Psalm 5:3)

Thus wrote the psalmist David in the innocency and integrity of his soul. He could not have written thus if he had not been able to write as in verse one: "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation." (Psalm 5:1)

Looking up is a sign of hope and courage, and of a clear conscience. The guilty child hangs its head, and the criminal is afraid to look the officer of law in the face. Thus Ezra, when identifying himself with his people, said: "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head." (Ezra 9:6)

But the man whose heart is pure, whose thoughts are of God, and who meditates in His law day and night, can look up, not in self-confidence, but in the strength of Christ. Says David: "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head." (Psalm 3:3)

He whose heart is free from guile may look up, and he shall behold the beauty of the Lord, for "the pure in heart ... shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)--Signs of the Times, January 7, 1889--Psalm 5:3.

Chapter 10

Psalm 5: Keep Watch

"My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up." (Psalm 5:3)

The Revised Version renders its, "and will keep watch." For what would he look up and keep watch? Evidently for the blessings for which he prayed. Said he, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

Too many people make their requests known to God, but don't keep watch, so that, although the blessings are extended to them, they do not see them.

The Lord loves to have people do Him the honor of acting as though they expected to receive from Him the things that He has promised.--Present Truth, July 27, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 5:3.

Chapter 11

Psalm 5: Trusting and Rejoicing

"But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let them also that love your name be joyful in You." (Psalm 5:11)

Although this was written by David, it is the language of the Holy Spirit.

Now when the Lord says, "Let a thing be," it is the same as saying, "It shall be." When the Lord said, "Let there be light," it meant, "There shall be light." When He says, "Let it be," it is so. Therefore we may read this psalm, as it is indicated in the margin of the Revised Version:

"All those that trust in You shall rejoice; they shall ever shout for joy, because You defend them; they also that love your name shall be joyful in You."

If we are not rejoicing, that is evidence that we are not trusting the Lord.--Present Truth, August 16, 1894--Psalm 5:11.

Chapter 12

Psalm 5: Loving-Kindness in the Morning

"My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord." (Psalm 5:3)

This verse in the 5th Psalm is more than a mere statement of the fact that in the morning I will pray.

"My voice shall You hear" is an assurance given by the Holy Spirit that God will hear us when we do lift up our voice to Him. He listens for our voice in the morning. Does He hear it? He also speaks to us His morning greeting. Are we listening for it? "He wakens morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear." (Isaiah 50:4)

What is it that God is so desirous that we should hear in the morning? "Cause me to hear your loving-kindness in the morning." (Psalm 143:8) "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not thelaw of your mother: Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck. When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Proverbs 6:20-23)

Every morning bears to us a fresh message of God's lovingkindness, with which to begin the new day. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto your name, O Most High! To show forth your loving-kindness in the morning, and your faithfulness every night." (Psalm 92:1-2)

Evidently this is the theme for our morning meditation, and that which should inspire our praise and prayer: The loving-kindness of the Lord. His loving-kindness each morning assures us that we shall be led, protected, fed, and kept through the day. "And your faithfulness every night." (Psalm 92:2)

If we hear His loving-kindness in the morning, we shall assuredly declare His faithfulness at night; for all the events of the day will have proved it.

When darkness falls, and the perils of the night come on, knowing that He makes us dwell in safety we shall lay us down in peace and sleep, committing "the keeping of our souls to Him as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:19)--Present Truth, January 15, 1903--Original title: Back Page Psalm 5:3.

Chapter 13

Psalm 7: Righteous Judgment

Whenever the kindness and mercy of the Lord are dwelt upon in order that sinners may be encouraged to trust Him, someone will always be sure to interpose with the objection, "Yes, but the Bible says that God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm 7:11)

Of course the natural effect upon the doubting, trembling soul is to lead him to think, "I know that I am wicked, and therefore God is angry with me."

And then will follow either a feeling of apathy, or else vain efforts to do something to appease the supposed anger of God. Thus the purpose of the enemy of souls is accomplished.

Remembering that "God is love"; that "[He] so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" (John 3:16) and that this was a sacrifice on the part of God himself, because "The Word was with God, and the Word was God," (John 1:1) and, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," (2 Corinthians 5:19) let us examine the scripture in which the statement of God's continual anger against all men--"for all have sinned,"--is supposed to be found. It is the 7th Psalm, and we will study it as a whole. The study will show incidentally the danger of building a theory on a single text detached from its connection.

In the quotation of the palm, which follows, we have not followed any one translation, but have combined several, so as to give the most literal and vivid rendering of the Hebrew. It will be seen that the psalm may be naturally divided into six sections, the last consisting of but one verse. The first section presents a picture of:

1. One Pursued by the Enemy

"O Lord my God, in You do I take refuge; save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me; Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, when there is none to deliver." (Psalm 7:1-2)

This is the cry of a soul in extreme peril. He is chased by an enemy who is like a raging lion, which will tear him in pieces if he does not find a place of safety. We see at the very outset that we have before us the cry of a soul pursued by Satan, the great Destroyer; for: "The devil, as a roaring lion, goes about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

In a preceding article we have read some of the text which show how sure a refuge God is in such times of peril. The next section shows:

2. The Injustice of the Enemy's Attack

"O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands: If I have rendered evil to him that was at peace with me; (I have even delivered him that was my enemy without cause); Let the enemy chase my soul and catch it; and let him tread my life to the earth, and cast down my glory to the dust." (Psalm 7:3-5)

The lion cares nothing for the fact that his prey is inoffensive, and has done him no injury. He is filled with a desire to destroy, and he slays to gratify his own passion for destroying.

So the devil lies in wait for the innocent, as shown in his dealing with our first parents in the garden of Eden. The spirit that deliberately plots the spiritual ruin of an innocent soul, is purely satanic. Such a degree of wickedness is abhorrent to any soul that is not utterly degraded, and so the psalmist utters a call for Judgment.

3. Call for Judgment

"Arise, O Lord, in your anger; lift up yourself against the fury of my adversaries; and awake for me the judgment You have commanded. So shall

the congregation of the peoples compass You about, and over it return You on high." (Psalm 7:6-7)

Read in the light of the first section of the psalm, this cry for vengeance does not seem so revengeful as it sometimes does to the careless reader. It is not the demand of one man for vengeance upon other men who are hostile to him, but it is a call for judgment upon the arch-enemy.

Moreover it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that the element of human passion does not enter into it. Compare this section, and indeed the whole psalm, with the 35th Psalm.

In this section we have present before us, in brief, the last judgment, and its results. When the judgment which God has commanded, shall be executed upon the "wicked spirits in high places," (Ephesians 6:12) the congregation of the people will compass the Lord about, as He returns on high to "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isaiah 24:23)

In the next section we have a statement of the certainty of the Judgment.

4. Certainty of the Judgment

"The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and the uprightness that is in me, Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; the righteous Lord tries the hearts and the reins. My shield it is with God, who delivers the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, yea, a God that has indignation continually. If He turn out, He has whet His sword, He has bent His bow, and made it ready; He has prepared for him the instruments of death, He will make His arrows fiery." (Psalm 7:8-13)

Have we here a little self-righteousness? No, for the Lord says of His people, "Their righteousness is of me." (Isaiah 54:17)

Remember that this is the prayer of one who has taken refuge in Christ, and "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)

The uprightness that is in such a one, is the uprightness of God, and it is according to that that the psalmist would be judged. The soul that makes God its refuge, can look on judgments without fear, because he is in the place whence they come, so that they cannot fall upon him.

It is in this section that the verse occurs which in the common version is rendered, "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm 7:11)

The words in italics, however, show what was added by the translators. Even if we take the text as it stands in the common version, there need be no difficulty, since we see that "the wicked" are not sinners on probation, but the devil and all his hosts, both of angels, and of men who have sold themselves to him to persecute the godly. "God is a righteous judge, yea, a God that has indignation continually." (Psalm 7:11)

Is it not well? Is it not comforting to know that we are not left alone and forgotten? that the efforts of the enemy to accomplish our destruction, awaken the indignation of the mighty God?

Even when Satan's rage works through men who have no fear of God before their eyes, we may know that God regards it as directed against Him. And so indeed it is, when we fly to Him for refuge. He makes our cause His own.

When the children of Israel were marching toward Canaan, the Amalekites came out to fight against them, but in reality it was to fight against God. In Exodus 17 we read: "Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord, therefore the Lord is against Amalek self-destroyed." (Exodus 17:16,margin)

5. Self-Destroyed

In the last part of the section of the psalm that we have just considered, there is evident allusion to the wicked, and the words, "if they turn not." (Psalm 7:12)

If the wicked turn not, God has prepared the instruments of destruction for him. (Read Job 38:22,24) In the following section we have a description of the persecutor, a statement which shows the justice of His punishment.

6. The Justice of His Punishment

"Behold, he travails with iniquity, and he has conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and dug it. And he shall fall into the ditch which he has made. His mischief shall return upon his own head. And upon his own crown shall his violence come down." (Psalm 7:14-16)

In the judgment it will appear that God is clear. He is love, and yet there is punishment for the wicked, and "fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries." (Hebrews 10:27)

And this is because He is love. We cannot now go further into particulars than to call attention to the obvious fact that it would not be an indication either of love or justice, for God to allow the wicked to destroy the innocent.

But let it not be forgotten that all the punishment that any wicked person will ever receive, will be only that which he brings upon himself, and which he might have avoided if he would. "Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But after your hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Romans 2:4-5)

So we read in the last part of the 1st chapter of Proverbs, that the wicked in their destruction only "eat of the fruit of their own way." (Proverbs 1:31)

All they that hate the Lord, love death.

"But he that sins against me wrongs his own soul: all they that hate me love death." (Proverbs 8:36)

Thus in the passage before us, the wicked only receive that which they themselves have worked out; they are taken in their own net, and fall into the pit which they dig for another. They that love cursing shall receive it, for God will give to every man that which he most delights in.

The last section is the ascriptions of praise.

7. The Ascriptions of Praise

"I will give thanks unto the Lord according to His righteousness: and will sing praises to the name of Jehovah Most High." (Psalm 7:17)

And thus we find, as we always shall, that the portion of Scripture which Satan uses for the purpose of discouraging people, is the one that is full of comfort for them.

If we are not ignorant of his devices, nor unmindful of the goodness of God, we shall know, whenever a text seems to be for the purpose of holding us off from God, that we do not understand it, and will study it with a prayer that the Holy Spirit will teach us the truth as it is in Jesus.--Present Truth, November 9, 1893--Psalm 7:1-17.

Chapter 14

Psalm 8: The Glory of the Lord

"Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! Who has set your glory above the heavens." (Psalm 8:1)

The first occurrence of the Hebrew word rendered "above" in this text is:

"Darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Genesis 1:2)

In the Revised Version the text reads, "Who has set your glory upon the heavens." (Psalm 8:1,RV)

Both renderings are correct, for the original word has the idea of: nearness, over, upon, against. The glory of God is far above all heavens, but it rests upon them. One thing is taught by the text, and that is that the glory that shines in the heavens is the glory of God. The latest translation, the "Polychrome," gives the verse thus:

"How glorious is your name over all the earth! And in the heavens, how your glory shines!"

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

There is no real glory either in heaven or earth, except the glory of God, just as He is the only real King in the universe, and the only One who has power. His is "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." (Matthew 6:13)

It is all His, no matter how much anybody else may claim, or how little He is recognized in His works. The heavens did not create themselves, neither do they manufacture their own light. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon

the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3)

Darkness, absolute darkness, without one suggestion of light, was upon all things when they were first created. With the earth in chaos, the heavens were dark. "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light." (Jeremiah 4:23)

So we know that the light is not originated by any created thing. In the shining of the heavens, they are simply showing forth the excellencies of Him who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all. But the darkness was not darkness to God. "The darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:12)

He is light, and the entrance of His Word gives light; so when He sent His Word into the darkness, light immediately shone forth.

Bodies of Light

Although it is a fact that none of the heavenly bodies evolve light from themselves, it is nevertheless true that they are bodies of light. Light existed, as we have seen, before the sun was formed; "And God saw the light, that it was good." (Genesis 1:4)

This was on the first day, and it was not until the fourth day that the sun was made to be a light. In some way, which only the Creator can comprehend, things which before were dark became light. They were not merely shone upon, but they were caused to shine forth. They do not originate light, but they emit from themselves the light which existed before they were formed. Although nothing but darkness in themselves, they are actually bodies of light.

Last of all God's works, man was created and was crowned with glory and honor, and set over the works of God's hands. "What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that 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: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas." (Psalm 8:4-8)

Man was made of the dust of the earth, and had in himself no more glory than the dust that still remained on the face of the earth; yet God made him in His own image, "crowned him with glory and honor," and caused him to have dominion over the works of His hands.

Since God is light, it was but natural that the being who was to be His representative on the earth, should bear His glory, even to a higher degree than the heavens, over which he was given dominion. "We are His workmanship," (Ephesians 2:10) even as the heavens are, and were created for His glory. He who made the heavenly orbs to be bodies of light, could most easily make their lord likewise a light bearer. We do not see it so now, because "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Through sin man lost the dominion, and likewise the glory; but "the first dominion" (Micah 4:8) shall yet be restored, and to this end God has chosen us to be "a royal priesthood, a holy nation,...that you should show forth the praises [virtues, or excellencies] of Him that called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

It is evident, therefore, that "in the ages to come," (Ephesians 2:7) even as at the beginning, God's people will be crowned with His own glory. This is very clear from the fact that: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:9-10)

Jesus is the second Adam; as man, in every respect like other men, He has gained back the dominion which the first Adam lost, and so, as Adam was, He is crowned with glory and honor. That glory is glory that surpasses the brightness of the sun.

God Manifested in the Flesh

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

In the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus turned the water into wine in Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth His glory." (John 2:11)

Mark this: He manifested forth His glory. The glory was there all the time, only veiled. So on the mount with Peter, James and John, "[He] was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." (Matthew 17:2)

The light did not shine upon Him, but shone forth from Him. Jesus was on earth an ordinary man, with nothing in His appearance to distinguish Him from other men. "He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:3)

Yet He was full of the glory of God. That glory was in the form of grace and truth; it manifested itself in good works and kind deeds. His was the glory of God, which is the glory of a perfect character. Said Christ of His disciples, "And the glory which You gave me, I have given them." (John 17:22)

When "Christ dwells in the heart by faith, [we are] ... strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, ... according to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:17,16)

As the image of God is renewed in the soul by the indwelling of the Spirit, the glory of God is revealed, yet not in a form that appeals to the eyes of the world, who are attracted by that which is gaudy, and which dazzles.

Preparing the Way

"The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40:3-5)

This is the preparation for the second coming of Christ. The only thing that hinders His coming at once, is the lack of preparation on the part of people. The way of the Lord is thus prepared by His forerunner: "He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17)

God's way must be prepared in the hearts of His people. This preparation is humility of heart, the acknowledgment that "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." (Isaiah 40:6)

When the heart is thus brought low, the way is prepared for the Lord to manifest himself. But God is light, so that whenever He appears in the way, His glory is revealed. That way is in His people; so that the glory of the Lord is to be revealed in the hearts and lives of men, and all are to see it there, even if they do not recognize it as God's glory. Some will see it, and will rejoice in the light. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory, for your mercy, and for your truth’s sake." (Psalm 115:1)

The heavens make no claim for themselves, consequently they show forth God's glory, and are themselves glory. So when we are willing that self shall sink out of sight, confess that we are nothing, and make no claim to distinction, we also may be "to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:12)

The glory will manifest itself as good works wrought by God in us, and will be nothing to attract people to us. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

Wonderful thought! that these poor, frail, mortal bodies are to shine with the brightness of the heavens. But so it is. "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:20-21,RV)

When Christ comes, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3)

Truly, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

What is the object of telling us about this wonderful glory? Is it merely that we may congratulate ourselves on the display we are one day to make? Far from it; for when that glory is revealed, we shall individually be as unconscious of it as we now are. Each will see the glory of the others, and delight in the sight, but like Moses, will not know that his own face sends forth rays of light. (Exodus 34:29) It is written for our encouragement.

Mark this: The glory is to be revealed in us; the righteous are to shine forth. God tells us of the future glory, in order that we may know what He gives to us in this present time. It is the power by which we are to overcome; for power is glory. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, (Romans 6:4) yet it was the working of God's "mighty power." (Ephesians 1:19-20) And this same power works in all who believe.

That glory is power will appear more fully in the article entitled, "The Fruit of the Light," (For this article, see the book, The Everlasting Gospel. It is in the "Related Articles" section of that book) and the power that God gives us in the conflict with sin, is "according to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:16)

The power and the glory that the heavens reveal is only a portion of that which God now gives to us by His Spirit. "We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as the Lord the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18,RV) "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." (2 Corinthians 4:7,RV)--Present Truth, August 11, 1898--Psalm 8:1, 4-8.

Chapter 15

Psalm 8: The Value of Praise

Praise, the Strongest Argument

According to the Scriptures, the strongest argument against all opposition to the truth of God, is praise. This appears plainly from the 8th Psalm: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! Who has set your glory upon the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You established strength, because of your adversaries, that You might still the enemy and the avenger." (Psalm 8:1-2,RV)

From the mouths of babes and sucklings comes a power that is sufficient to stop the mouths of the enemies of the Lord. But little children cannot argue and discuss; if they attempted, their reasoning is feeble, and the effect is painful, because it is unnatural for them, and out place. What does naturally come from the mouths of children? Praise, gladsome praise, and joy. This is seemly, and is the power that can stop the mouths of enemies.

This is not merely our conclusion. We have the words of the Lord for it. When the children cried in the temple, as Jesus entered it after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and said, "Hosanna to the Son of David," (Matthew 21:9) and the priests were displeased, Jesus said to them, "Have you never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:16)

Thus we have Christ himself as authority for the statement that the "power" mentioned in the 8th Psalm is praise. It is difficult to frame an argument to which a shrewd man cannot make some plausible reply, a reply at least plausible enough to cover his retreat. But who can frame an argument against praise? There is nothing to reply to. Even the enemy's anger against the truth and the one who holds it, must to some extent be appeased, because: "A soft answer turns away wrath." (Proverbs 15:1)

Then let us use the argument of praise more and more. Aye, let us learn how to use it to the exclusion of everything else. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto your name, O Most High." (Psalm 92:1) "Praise the Lord; for it good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." (Psalm 147:1) "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders." (Psalm 107:31-32)

Who May Praise the Lord?

A strange question! some may say. Yes, it is a strange question, but not an unnecessary one, since there are many poor souls who do not dare praise the Lord, because they think that they are not good enough to do so. They pray to the Lord, the best they know how, and they have the most sincere desire to serve Him, but they do not dare venture to praise Him. Well, one sentence is enough to answer the question that we have asked, and it is this: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)

The poor, unworthy people may praise the Lord? Nay, not may; that is too feeble; they must. If you will persist in regarding the words, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord," as merely a permission, and not as the commandment that it is, then read: "O praise Jehovah, all you heathen, Laud Him all you nations! For His goodness rules powerfully over us, and Jehovah's faithfulness is ever-enduring! Hallelujah." (Psalm 117:1-2)

"Hallelujah" means "Praise Jehovah!" The very heathen, wickedest people in the world, are called upon to praise the Lord. Well, why not? They are the ones who most of all need to praise the Lord. The more wicked a man is, the more need there is that he should praise the Lord.

If the heathen should praise the Lord, they would at once cease to be heathen. Praise is worship, and they who worship the Lord are righteous. So it is to the unworthy and the wicked that the command is specially directed, "Praise you Lord!" The others are doing it already.

Salvation and Praise

In the 50th Psalm, last verse, we read these words of the Lord: "Whoso offers praise glorifies me; and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23)

Of course the reader knows that the word "conversation," as commonly used in the Bible, means "way, manner of life." But there is more to be said about this verse. In the Hebrew text there are not nearly so many words as appear in the English, and if only the very words that appear in the Hebrew were translated, with no additions, we should have the text as indicated in the margin of the Revised Version, thus: "Whoso offers praise glorifies me, and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23,RV,margin)

Here, then, we have an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

The answer is, "Praise the Lord."

And what then? Keep on praising the Lord, He who begins to praise the Lord, and continues to praise Him, will as surely be saved day by day and for ever, as the sun shines in the heavens, or as God lives. Let us see how this may be; it is not difficult to understand.

If one is thanking and praising the Lord, that one is certainly not sinning against Him, is he? One cannot praise the Lord, and at the same time blaspheme His name, or in any way speak slightingly of Him. The mere statement of the case proves it: He who praises the Lord serves Him.

The highest angels in heaven do no more than this. The living beings that are nearest to God, forming part of His throne, "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (Revelation 4:8)

Praise is the Most Natural Thing

The fact that praise brings salvation will appear more vividly when we think of this phase of the subject, that praise is the easiest and most natural thing in the world. If all men, the ungodly man, would act in harmony even with their own standard of common civility, they would be continually praising the Lord, and would be saved.

It is universally recognized that when a person receives a gift he ought to thank the giver.

• The wickedest man, the one who will rage the most at the name of God, will thank you if you do him a favor.

• Hand an infidel any book that he wishes to read, or answer his inquiry as to the right road to take, and he will thank you.

• If he comes down to breakfast in the morning and finds a bouquet of fresh flowers at his plate, his first thought will be to ask who gave them to him, and his next will be to thank the one who so kindly remembered him.

Every man will do these things, and there is no one who would not feel that it was a gross breach of politeness to fail to recognize favors bestowed. Very well, let each one simply be consistent. Let him not discriminate, and give thanks for some things, and neglect to do so for others. Above all things, let him not say "Thank you" for little things, and say not a word for the greatest favors. "Of course not! Who would be so foolish?"

Let us see. You come to the table, and find food. How did it come there? The good housewife placed it there, to be sure; but she did not make it. No man on earth could make a grain of corn. No man can make fruit grow from the ground. All that any man can do is to watch it. It is God that "causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that He may bring forth fruit out of the earth." (Psalm 104:14) "He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

Is it seemly to take these things continually from the hand of the Lord, and never thank Him for them? It is a great blessing, or favor, if you prefer to use that word, to be able to breathe. If you have never thought of it, you will realize it if you get into a close room where the air is almost used up, or have your lungs so filled up that you cannot breathe without pain.

Now where do you get your breath? You do not make the air; your neighbor does not furnish it to you. It comes regularly and continually, without any thought on your part. It comes when you are asleep, and not able to think of it. It is your life, the most necessary thing in the world, and yet you get it for nothing, absolutely free. Isn't it worth thanking for?

And there is the light. You could not get along without it. It is life. Every day it comes new. Is it consistent to say "Thank you" to one who hands you a flower, and never say a word to the One who creates the light and the air and the moisture that made it grow? Just be honorable and fair. Deal with God as justly, and treat Him as civilly, as you do your fellow-men. "Render therefore to all their dues; ... fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." (Romans 13:7)

Begin with the first thing at hand, and thank the one who gives it to you, and do so with everything that you receive, and you will then be a perfect man. Come now, that is a fair proposition, isn't it? All that is required of you is to use ordinary civility, and give thanks impartially for all that you get, to whomsoever gives you them. Do this, and your mouth and heart will continually be filled with praise to the Lord, "Who gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25)

When you once begin, you will find things enough to be thankful for. Do not cease giving thanks until you have exhausted everything that there is for which to give thanks.

Remember that it is not enough to have thanked a person once for a favor, when he repeats it. If he does a thing for you twice, the thing to do is to thank him the second time, as well as the first. If he does not tire of repeating the favor, surely you ought not to tire of thanking him for it. The gift of life and

light and breath and all things is continuous, and therefore the thanksgiving must be continuous.

I will not urge you to do this heartily. No matter how you feel about it, simply recognize the Lord in His gifts, and have this ability to thank Him for what you receive of Him. Do this, and the greatness of the gifts received from Him will impress itself more and more upon your mind, so that soon thanks will come spontaneously, and you will not know how to stop.

Then all will be well with you, for when you acknowledge that every breath that you breathe you get from Him, you will see that He is your life, and the same rule of fairness that led you to thank Him for what He gives, will lead you to allow Him to control His own life. "In all your ways knowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

When God directs your steps in His own way, your way will be right, for: "As for God, His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

Then,

Oh, worship the King, all glorious above!
And gratefully sing His power and His love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And gently distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail--
In You do we trust, nor find You to fail;
Your mercies how tender, how firm to the end!
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend!
--Robert Grant, Hymn: O Worship the King, 1833.

--Present Truth, April 28, 1898--Psalm 8:1-2.

Chapter 16

Psalm 8: Power Through Weakness

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger." (Psalm 8:2)

Truly our God is a great God. He is so great in power that He can laugh at the combined forces of all His enemies; "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 2:2-4) and when He proceeds to put them to confusion He employs means that make their shame complete.

Had He proceeded against them with all the pomp and majesty of His infinite power, they might say, "We did well to make any stand at all against such odds; certainly our defeat is no disgrace."

But when He puts them to flight by the power that He can exert through a babe, their mouths are forever stopped.

And here is the comfort of this for the struggling, trembling Christian: Since God can silence all His enemies by babes and sucklings, what an abundant deliverance must be ours when He bows the heavens and comes down, riding upon the heavens for our help, and in His excellency on the sky: "Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." (Psalm 144:5) "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky." (Deuteronomy 33:26)

Compare Psalm 8:2 with Matthew 21:16. The one is: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have ordained strength," (Psalm 8:2) and the other, which is Christ's rendering of it is: "You have perfected praise." (Matthew 21:16)

Praise and strength are the same; and we see that the perfection of strength is found in babes. How can this be? Because God's strength is made perfect in weakness. Jesus Christ, a babe in the manger, was "the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24) "He was crucified through weakness." (2 Corinthians 13:4)

Yet the aroma is the power of God; and, "He lives by the power of God." (2 Corinthians 13:4)

Would you know how it is that the babe is the manifestation of the perfection of strength? It is because it is the perfection of trust.

It is helpless, but its helplessness is the very thing that ensures it the most tender care. In its helplessness it is far better protected than in after life, when the man has grown so strong and self-confident that he depends on himself.

So the one who like a babe rests confidingly in the everlasting arms, knowing that his weakness is a constant appeal to the loving sympathy of God, is strengthened with all might according to the power of His glory.--Present Truth, November 21, 1901--Psalm 8:2.

Chapter 17

Psalm 9: His Name

"And they that know your name will put their trust in You." (Psalm 9:10)

This being the case, it follows that there are very many in socalled Christian lands, and even in the church, who do not know the name of the Lord. Let us see something of what is involved in knowing the name of the Lord.

Names Indicate Character

In Scripture, names are not given at random. Every name has meaning. The true name indicates the character of the one to whom it belongs.

For instance, the name "Jacob" means "supplanter," and that was the character of the son of Isaac. He was a schemer, benefiting himself at the expense of somebody else. That was before he was converted. When the Lord met him, and, like Saul, he was "turned into another man," (1 Samuel 10:6) he was given the name "Israel," (Genesis 32:28) to indicate the character of the new man. He was a conqueror over his besetments.

God's Name is His Character

So the name of God is the expression of His character. One may be familiar with the form and sound of the words which are used in His titles, without knowing the name of the Lord. His name is just what He is, and only those who are personally acquainted with Him know what His name is.

Moses prayed to be permitted to behold the glory of the Lord, God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you." (Exodus 33:10)

Accordingly, "The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before

him, and proclaim, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:5-7)

He who does not know the goodness and longsuffering and truth of the Lord, and that He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin, does not know His name.

God's Name in Nature

But no one need be ignorant of His name, for He has written it upon everything that He has made. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Psalm 33:5) "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth." (Psalm 8:1) "Your mercy, O Lord, it is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5)

The Lord's name is a glorious name, (Deuteronomy 28:58) and "The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

God's Name in Christ

The name of God is in Christ. The only begotten Son of God has by inheritance the same name. (Hebrews 1:4) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

Whoever knows Christ, therefore, knows God. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18) "He that has seen me, has seen the Father." (John 14:9) "And you shall call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

Jesus means Saviour. If He did not save, His name would be a misnomer. But His name is expressive of what He is. He saves by virtue of himself. In Him is salvation. "Behold God is my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)

Taking Refuge in His Name

Trustworthiness and fidelity beget confidence. No one can help trusting one whose honesty is well known. Even the most suspicious come at length to lose their doubts after long dealing with a one whose fidelity is unswerving. The cause of doubt is dishonesty and lack of faithfulness. If no lie had ever entered the world, there would never have been such a thing known as doubt. Goodness wins confidence, and so they who know the Lord must necessarily trust Him.

But the Scripture meaning of trusting is to take refuge. Psalm 7:10 would more accurately express the original, and would be more striking, if rendered as in the margin of the Revised Version, "O Lord, my God, in You do I take refuge; save me from them that pursue me, and deliver me." (Psalm 7:10,RV,margin)

So when we read, "They that know your name will put their trust in You," (Psalm 9:10) we may know that it means that they will take refuge in God. And this is in keeping with the verse just before: "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." (Psalm 9:9)

The Revised Version has it, "a high tower." God himself is a Tower, a Rock of defense, a tower of Refuge. (Psalm 18:2) But His name is just what He is; so we read, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs intoit, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

His name is a strong tower, an impregnable fortress; it stands to reason, therefore, that they who know it will fly to it for refuge, and will abide in it.

Christ is God. (John 1:1) The Father and the Son are one. (John 10:30) Their name is one. He who is in Christ is in God, for Christ "is in the bosom of the Father." (John 1:18)

Baptism is the sign of taking refuge in Christ: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

Those who have put on Christ in baptism, have taken refuge in God. Baptism therefore is a reality, and not a mere form, only when the soul consciously takes refuge from sin in the mighty name of God. This is in exact accord with the Saviour's commission, as properly rendered in the Revised Version: "Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19)

Reader, do you know the name of the Lord? It is easy to learn. When you know it, you know Him, and then you have eternal life: for, "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

Oh, the precious name of Jesus!
How it thrills our souls with joy.
When His loving arms receive us,
And His songs our tongues employ!
--Lydia Odell Baxter (1809-1874), Hymn: Take the Name of Jesus With You.

--Present Truth, July 26, 1894--Psalm 9:10.

Chapter 18

Psalm 11: The Sure Foundation

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3)

Every structure that is of any account must be built upon a foundation. In the close of the Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour graphically but accurately describes the consequence of building without any foundation. When "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house," (Matthew 7:25) it fell, because it was built upon the sand. The same thing would have happened to the house which was built upon a foundation, if the foundation could have been removed.

The tendency of the present age is to superficiality, but a good, solid foundation is nevertheless as necessary as it ever was. We believe that "the foundations," to which the psalmist refers in the text just quoted, are nothing else than the law of God--the ten commandments. To demonstrate this is the object of this article.

The psalmist continues in the next verse: "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." (Psalm 11:4)

This shows that there is an intimate connection between "the foundations," and the throne of God and the temple in heaven. What this connection is, we proceed to show. In the 25th chapter of Exodus we find directions concerning the building of the sanctuary. The sanctuary was to be a dwelling-place for God. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8)

From the 26th chapter we learn that it was an oblong building, and inclosed on three sides with boards, and on the fourth by a cloth curtain, and that by a similar curtain it was divided into two apartments--the holy place and the most holy place. In the holy place there was an altar of incense, a

golden candlestick, and a table of show-bread: "And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail. And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; as the Lord had commanded Moses. And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. And he lighted the lamps before the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses. And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail: And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded Moses." (Exodus 40:22-27)

In the most holy place was the ark of the testimony: "And you shall make for the hanging five pillars of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, and their hooks shall be of gold: and you shall cast five sockets of brass for them." (Exodus 26:37)

And it is to this that we wish to call especial attention. This ark was a wooden box overlaid and lined with pure gold. Its cover was termed the "mercy-seat," and was of solid gold, having on each end a cherub beaten out of the same piece of pure gold. "And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And you shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you." (Exodus 25:20-21)

What this "testimony" was, we easily find by the comparison of a few texts of Scripture. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount,and be there; and I will give you tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that you may teach them." (Exodus 24:12)

Moses went up, and was there forty days and forty nights, during which time he received the instructions found in chapters 25-31. After noting these instructions, the sacred narrative continues: "And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18)

We notice that the tables of testimony were tables of stone. Tracing them further, we find that when Moses came down from the mount, with the two tables in his hand, he broke them at the foot of the mount, in his righteous anger at the idolatry of the people: "And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount." (Exodus 32:15-19)

This experience is detailed by Moses in the 9th of Deuteronomy, and in the 10th chapter he proceeds with the narrative as follows: "At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in my hand. And He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spoke unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me." (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)

We have now positive assurance that the "testimony" that was placed in the ark was the ten commandments, and that it was on this account that the ark of was called "the ark of the testimony."

Now note again in Exodus 25, that the cover to the ark was called the "mercy-seat," and that upon it were two cherubim, one on each end. The

Lord said: "And you shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:21-22)

God dwelt between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat above the testimony, and it was this that made it necessary for the high priest to burn incense when he ministered in the most holy place. The cloud of incense veiled the glory of God, which unobscured, would have caused his death. "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. ... And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Leviticus 16:3,13)

Now to the point of all this. The Jewish tabernacle, and all things connected with it, were patterned after something that Moses had seen in the mount: "According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it. ... And look that you make them after their pattern, which was shown you in the mount." (Exodus 25:9,40)

They were "patterns of the things in the heavens;" (Hebrews 9:23) and "the holy places made with hands [were only] figures of the true [holy places in Heaven]." (Hebrews 9:24)

There must be, then, a real tabernacle in Heaven, and this is plainly stated in: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum; we have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Hebrews 8:1-2)

"A minister of the sanctuary." There is but one, since that built by Moses was only a miniature representation of the true tabernacle in the heavens, which the Lord pitched. This temple in Heaven has been seen by mortal eye.

The beloved disciple says: "And the temple of God was opened in Heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His Testament." (Revelation 11:19)

This temple in Heaven is the special dwelling-place of God. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." (Psalm 11:4)

We already noted that not only the tabernacle, but all its furniture, was modeled after things in the heavens. Said the Lord to Moses: "According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." (Exodus 25:9)

After giving directions concerning the ark, the table, and the candlestick, He repeated the injunction: "And look that you make them after their pattern, which was shown you in the mount." (Exodus 25:40)

Accordingly we find (Revelation 11:19) that the ark of the testament is one of the things in the temple in heaven. Now remember that in the earthly tabernacle God's dwelling-place was above the ark, between the cherubim that were upon the mercy-seat. "And you shall put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:21-22) "Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. ... And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, thatthe cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Leviticus 16:3,13)

Then since the earthly tabernacle was a type of God's real dwelling-place,--the temple in Heaven,--it must be that the ark of the testament was a figure of God's throne in heaven. To corroborate this conclusion, we read that God's real dwelling-place is between the cherubim. Says David, in

prayer to God: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that lead Joseph like a flock; that dwell between the cherubim, shine forth." (Psalm 80:1)

Again: "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble; He sits between the cherubim; let the earth be moved." (Psalm 99:1)

Here the fact that God reigns is connected with His sitting between the cherubim, showing conclusively that when reigning upon His throne He is between the cherubim. God sits between the cherubim; He reigns; therefore the people should tremble. When Hezekiah was in trouble, "[He] prayed for the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwell between the cherubim, You are God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth." (2 Kings 19:15)

And the Lord, speaking of Satan under the figure of the king of Tyre, said: "You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so; you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire." (Ezekiel 28:14)

These texts show plainly that the cherubim upon the Mercy seat, from between which God spoke to the people, were representations of the cherubim that cover the throne of God in heaven, and that therefore the mercy-seat, supported by the ark, was a figure of God's throne. This is why the most holy place and the ark were considered so sacred.

But if the ark and the mercy-seat were a representation of God's throne, then the tables of testimony--the ten commandments--which it contained must be considered as showing the relation existing between the real throne of God in heaven and the original copy of the ten commandments.

The ark existed for the sole purpose of holding the law, and therefore the ten commandments must be considered as forming the foundation of God's throne. David says, "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." (Psalm 97:1-2)

Now when we read that God's commandments are righteousness, "My tongue shall speak of your word: for all your commandments are righteousness;" (Psalm 119:172) and further, that they are God's righteousness: "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished; Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings;" (Isaiah 51:6-7) we are assured that the ten commandments which God spoke from Sinai, and which were copied on tables of stone, form the foundation of God's throne.

A throne is the symbol of royal power and authority. We speak of "the throne of England," meaning the Government of England. Therefore we state the literal fact, that the ten commandments are the foundation of God's throne. It is equivalent to saying that they form the basis of God's Government; that all of God's judgments are in harmony with them, and that they cover every act of His in the government of His creatures.

From these facts thus briefly stated, the following conclusions are evident:

1. The Law of God Is the Law of the Universe

The law of God--the ten commandments--is the law of the universe. "The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)

Not only this earth, but all the world and the Heaven of heavens are subject to His authority, and amenable to His holy law. The highest angel in Heaven, and the lowest saint on earth; the arch deceiver and the most simple of his deluded victims, are alike judged by that perfect law. No righteous act or thought is outside of its sanctions, and no evil can be conceived that it does not condemn.

2. The Law of God Existed Before Creation

The law of God was in existence before the creation of the earth. When the foundations of the world were laid, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7)

The "sons of God" were the subjects of His righteous Government, and therefore subject to the law of God, which is the basis of that Government. In proof of this, and also of the preceding proposition, read: "Bless, the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." (Psalm 103:20)

Since the ten commandment law is perfect, and contains, as we have seen, all the principles of God's Government, there can be no other commandments for the angels to obey. All commands of God are comprised within the precepts of Sinai.

3. The Ten Commandments Are Eternal

The ten commandments can never have any end. Since they are the foundation of God's throne, they must endure as long as it endures, and it must endure as long as God himself exists, for if He were not Supreme Ruler He would not be God. Now listen to the sublime words of the psalmist: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Psalm 90:1-2)

More emphatic language could not be used. But since it is impossible for God to exist apart from His Government, that must also be to everlasting, and the ten commandments, the basis of that Government, must have an equal duration.

4. The Law of God Is Unchangeable

Not only can it not be abolished, but not one of its precepts can undergo the slightest alteration. We speak not of mere verbal changes which do not affect the sense, but of changes in the force or application of law.

Since the law is the foundation of God's throne, its ten precepts may be considered as the ten pillars constituting the foundation.

It was doubtless with this idea in mind that Bishop E.O. Haven named his book which contained his ten sermons on the law,--one sermon on each commandment,--"The Pillars of Truth."

When workmen wish to make any repairs in the foundation of a building, they put up a prop underneath, to take the place of the defective foundation while repairs are being made. But what can be placed under the throne of the universe to uphold it while repairs are being made in any of its corner-stones? Nothing.

Men may theorize about a change in the fourth commandment, but such a change is an impossibility. To make it would be to make a revolution in the Government of Heaven. It may be urged that God has power to make such a change, but one thing God cannot do: He cannot deny himself. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

5. God's Law Is His Will

"Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." (Romans 2:17-18)

It is His righteousness; a transcript of His own nature; a photograph of His character. Therefore for God to make a change in the law would show that His character had undergone a change, and that is an impossibility. With Him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

If His law was the truth in the days of David, (Psalm 119:142; Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth) it could not be changed without becoming a lie, and it is only the enemies of God who seek to do this. These facts absolutely prove the proposition that God's law is absolutely unchangeable. They enable us to better appreciate the words of the psalmist: "Your word is truth from the beginning; and every one of your righteous judgments endures for ever." (Psalm 119:160)

It follows as a necessary conclusion, that the saints through all eternity will yield obedience to the law. To do otherwise would make them no more saints, but traitors. Some people tell us that a righteous man has no need for the law of God. But the psalmist thought otherwise, for he said: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3)

To say that because God's people are all righteous, therefore they have no need of the law, is like saying that because no one falls over a precipice at the top of which a strong barrier has been erected, therefore the barrier is unnecessary.

None are more interested than the righteous, in having the law of God preserved intact through the ages of eternity. It alone attests their loyalty to God. It is to them a sure pledge that no power in the universe can endanger their rights as subjects of the God of Heaven.

It shows them that it is not in vain that they make the eternal God their refuge, and that He who in His excellency rides upon the heavens to the help of His people, is abundantly able to protect all who put their trust in Him.

May the Lord hasten the day when His kingdom shall come; when His will shall be done in all the earth even as it is now done in Heaven; (Psalm 103:20; Bless, the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word) when His children shall all be righteous; when "His servants shall serve Him; And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." (Revelation 22:3-4)--Signs of the Times, October 8, 1885--Psalm 11:3-4.

Chapter 19

Psalm 11: God's Temple and Its Glory

"The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." (Psalm 11:4) "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." (Isaiah 66:1) "Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:23-24) "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:18)

God has a dwelling-place in the heavens, yet not so that anybody can locate Him in one place to the exclusion of all others; for He is everywhere; He fills all things. "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-9)

Therefore all creation is the temple of the living God. The Jews and the Samaritans quarreled over whether God's house was in Jerusalem or in Samaria. If they had but known the Scriptures, they would have known that even the desolate wilderness is the house of God, and the gate of heaven. (See Genesis 28:10-17) "Verily You are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel the Saviour." (Isaiah 45:15)

Yet He does not hide himself so that He cannot be found. Whoever uses his eyes, may see God revealed in every plant and tree, in every flowing stream, and in the birds that fly in the heavens. (See Romans 1:30) From this it follows that man also forms a part of God's great temple. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Read the whole of this chapter, and the two chapters following, and you will readily see that this language is addressed not to perfected saints, but to men who are living in sin. It is the Spirit's strongest appeal to men to live holy lives. God makes men His temples, in order that He may sanctify them by His presence.

The question at once suggests itself: "If all creation, even fallen nature; is the temple of God, how is it that in His temple everything says, Glory?" (Psalm 29:9)

It is not ours to question how God's Word can be true, but by believing it to see its truth. The seraphim, who stand above God's throne, beholding Him day and night, declare, that "The whole earth is full of His glory," (Isaiah 6:3) or, "The fullness of the whole earth is His glory."

We are daily witnesses of this. In spite of the curse upon the earth, the glory of God manifests itself. From the bare trees of winter, victims of the curse of death, spring forth the green leaves and bright blossoms of spring, revealing the resurrection power and glory of the Lord. Every beauteous bud, every delicatelytinted flower, every gleam of sunshine, is but the shining forth of the glory of God, which cannot be wholly veiled even by the curse. The songs of the birds are but the echo of the voice that is heard in the chorus of the angels before the throne of God.

But there are many men who use their voices only in blasphemy of the holy name of God; how do they say, "Glory"? Again we must remember that belief of God's Word gives us the explanation of it. God says that everything says, "Glory," and so it must be. Every man who lives and moves is a monument of God's love and power: "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25)

Even the foul language with which debased men pollute God's temple, is an unconscious testimony to God's longsuffering and lovingkindness, and therefore a witness "To the praise of the glory of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6)

God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him. The fact that God gives men the breath with which they deny Him, shows His glorious grace. God's will is sure to be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. No adversary can thwart God's will, which is that "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14)

Such is His glorious power that He advances His cause even by the attempts of the enemy to thwart it. Willingly or unwillingly, every creature that God has created, must contribute to His glory and praise. How much better to have it done with our consent, than against it!

Since God can do such marvelous things and show the wonders of His glory even through those who are in opposition to Him, what can He not do with those who yield themselves to Him? Therefore, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God," (Romans 6:13) that you may "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20)--Present Truth, May 11, 1899--Psalm 11:4.

Chapter 20

Psalm 12: Inclined to Speak as We Please

When we are inclined to think that we have a right to say whatever we please, it will be well for us to read the following: "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things; Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" (Psalm 12:3-4)

Our lips are not our own, for we ourselves are not our own. Every organ of our bodies belongs to the Lord, for Him to use as He will, to His glory. "The tongue can no man tame." (James 3:8)

Since this is so, we do well to deliver ourselves unreservedly over to the Lord, praying, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3)--Present Truth, September 12, 1901--Psalm 12:3-4.

Chapter 21

Psalm 12: Every Word

"The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Psalm 12:6)

This is true not merely of a few words, but of all: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him." (Proverbs 30:6)

Moreover, there is enough in the words of God for every necessary purpose. They are sufficient to make a man "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:17)

Not only is nothing more needed, but whatever is added to God's words is a lie. "Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." (Proverbs 30:7)

There is no trace of error or likeness to untruth in the words of the Lord. He is the truth; therefore His words are truth, for they are His life. "Your word is true from the beginning; and every one of your righteous judgments endures for ever." (Psalm 119:160)

Unto us the Lord says, "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil." (Matthew 5:37)

Also, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11)

That is, the Lord wishes men to speak just as He does, but He will not have them equivocate. They must not say one thing, and mean another. This is because there is nothing of that kind in the words of God. He is not double-minded nor double-tongued.

God is infinite: "There is no searching of His understanding." (Isaiah 40:28)

Therefore His word is of infinite depth. Eternity will not be long enough to enable the keenest intellect or the most diligent student to exhaust the meaning of any one of the words of the Lord.

Thus it is that we can always return to the same word, and find something fresh and new. It is a sun shining with never-fading light; a fountain whose waters never fail. Therefore the one who comes into close acquaintance with the Word of God never tires of it any more than he tires of the light of the sun, the fresh beauty of nature, or the sparkling flow of the mountain stream.

By these facts we may understand what some people call the "double meaning" of the Scriptures. There is in reality no such thing. God does not require us to be better than He is; but He will not have our speech Yea and Nay; that is, He, will not have us speak with a double meaning; therefore we may be sure that He will not speak that way.

What sometimes appears to be a double meaning in the words of the Lord, is simply a deeper view into the same meaning that first appeared. We assumed that we had fathomed the full meaning of the Word; in our self-conceit we did not dream that the Lord could think greater thoughts than we could, and so we assumed that our grasp of the passage was all there was to it, at least in that direction.

And then when we chanced to see something more in it, we thought that it must be still another meaning. But it was not so. We were simply by His grace looking a little deeper into the fountain; and He would have us understand that what we had thought was the bottom, was only the limit of our previous eyesight; now the Spirit has opened our eyes to see a little further into "the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10)

The knowledge and remembrance of these truths concerning the Word will save us from two errors in studying the Bible:

1. We shall never assume that we know all that may be known even of any single portion of it. No matter how well acquainted we may he with any

part of the Bible, we shall know that there is always much more in it for us to learn.

2. We shall on the other hand not fall into the error that we cannot absolutely depend on what any text says, unless we know every text that has any bearing on the same subject.

One error is as bad as the other for either one keeps us from coming to the knowledge of the truth.

It is very evident that we can never learn what the Lord would have us learn from His Word, if we assume that we know it all now. But it is just as evident that we shall never believe anything with certainty, if we labor under the fear that we may possibly come across another text which will overthrow or change the meaning of the one that we have before us.

Not long ago we read a portion of a conversation on the Bible, in which one of the speakers, a lady, said, "We cannot take one verse of the Scripture and say this is the way, the truth, and the life, but must compare scripture with scripture."

This is a very common opinion even among those who mean to reverence the Word of God. They do not realize that they are virtually saying that none of God's words are absolutely true in themselves, but that we must collate them all, and strike an average, in order to get at the real truth. That is a terrible charge to bring against the Lord. "Every word of God is pure." (Proverbs 30:5)

We are to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Every word is truth and life. Any word of the Lord is sufficient to give life to the one who receives it as the Word of the Lord. If a man knew only one verse of the Bible, and believed it, he would be saved by it. This does not disparage any other word, for every other word has the same power, and

although any one word is sufficient for salvation, it is much better to have more than one, yea, to have them all.

A tallow candle gives light, which is just as real light, and of the same kind, as that which the sun gives; and while the candle will suffice to light us through a dark passage, we should rejoice much more in the sunshine.

Some time ago a friend of the writer referred to Luther's controversy over the Lord's Supper, as an instance of the error of supposing that any one text expressed absolute truth in itself. It is well known that Luther kept repeating the words, "This is my body," (Matthew 26:26) and would not be moved from them. Yet he was wholly wrong in his position concerning the bread of the Lord's Supper. And why? Was it because he stood so firmly for the exact and literal meaning of the Word of the Lord? No; not by any means; it was because he did not take the words of the Lord absolutely.

If he had taken the words which he so often repeated, just as they were spoken by the Lord, he would have had no trouble, but would have been led into a greater truth than anybody thought of at that time. Jesus said, as He took the bread, "This is my body." (Matthew 26:26)

He did not say that it would become His body after something had been done to it, or some words had been repeated over it, but that it was His body, just as He took it up. Luther did not believe that, nor do many today.

What Luther meant, when he repeated the words of Christ, was that the bread became the body of Christ, after the priest had transformed it. But that, you can see, was not at all what the Lord said. That was not holding to the text, but was widely departing from it.

What the Lord said, and what He would have us understand every day of our lives, is that the bread from which we get our life day by day, conveys to us His own life, by which alone we live. There is no life but His. He is the life. He is the body, the substance, the reality, of everything that is of any value. He is the true and living Bread.

If it were not for His life in the bread that we eat, it would not be food, and we could get no life from it. He would have us take His words as absolute literal truth; and if we do that, we shall find that there is life in them. Jeremiah knew this truth, when he said, "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jeremiah 15:16)

It was by giving the children of Israel bread in the desert, that God sought to impress on them the fact that man lives only by every word that proceeds out of His mouth. (See Deuteronomy 8:3) Let us learn this lesson, and "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word," (1 Peter 2:2) in order that we may be filled with righteousness.--Present Truth, June 16, 1898--Psalm 12:6.

Chapter 22

Psalm 14: God Looked Down

"God looked down from heaven upon the children of men." (Psalm 14:2)

What for? "To see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God." (Psalm 14:2)

Many people judge God by themselves, and imagine that He is looking on man to discover imperfections.

One looks for what one wishes to find; and God does not desire to find evil. There is enough of evil; but God is certain to find all the good there is.

What are you looking for?--Present Truth, October 24, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 14:2.

Chapter 23

Psalm 15: Comments

"Lord, who shall abide in your tabernacle? Who shall dwell in your holy hill?" (Psalm 15:1)

This is certainly a most pertinent question. If a person desires to go to a certain place, his first inquiry will be as to how he is to get there.

Now there are few persons who do not have a desire for eternal life; few do not entertain a faint hope, though often without reason, that they will at last by some means have an entrance into the holy city. Then the question of the psalmist should be constantly on their minds; that is, they should constantly be searching for an answer to it.

No one will enter Heaven by accident; no one will dwell in the "holy hill" without knowing positively by what means he got there. As surely as the joys in the presence of the Lord are real, so surely are the steps to them real. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

Fortunately, we are not left to grope in darkness for the way to Zion, nor need we be at a loss to know when we have found it. The inspired psalmist has answered his own question. Let us then examine it together. Here is the first part of the answer:

vs. 2: He that walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart.

vs. 3: He that backbites not with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor.

The first clause seems to cover it all: "He that walks uprightly." (Psalm 15:2)

We hear a great deal nowadays about "crooked" dealings. The way that leads to life is too narrow to allow any "crooked" person to walk in it. Every one in it must be upright. Reader, do you realize what that means? Do any of us fully appreciate what it is to do right? It is simply to "keep straight" all the time; to be upright; to not deviate at all from a perfect standard. It is to "Make straight paths for your feet," (Hebrews 12:13) and to walk in them continually, and not simply occasionally. The great reason why many professed Christians make so little progress in the Christian life, is that they have so low a standard of Christianity. What is the proper standard? John says: "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." (1 John 2:6)

Christ is the perfect pattern. He is the way and the truth. "[He] did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. This was because the law of God was in His heart." (1 Peter 2:22) "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8) Then if we would walk "uprightly," as Christ walked, we must also have the law of God in our hearts; for David says of the one who has the law of God in his heart: "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." (Psalm 37:31)

So if one wishes to know how much the law of God requires of him, let him examine carefully the life of Christ. In his life we see a living exemplification of the law.

But if the law requires a walk like that of Christ, if perfect obedience to the law's requirements makes a man like Christ, then certainly the law will condemn the one whose life is not like Christ's. If we deviate from the pattern which Christ has set, then we are condemned. Surely it is no small thing to be a Christian. But the psalmist has specified some things:

vs. 2: He that ... speaks the truth in his heart.

Outwardly a man's deportment may be correct; his morals may be fully up to the standard of the very best society, and yet he may be a gross violator of the law, and may be more guilty before God than one who sins openly and

recklessly. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

But no one must fall into the error that he can keep the law in his heart, and break it openly. Many have fallen into this error; for this is just what they mean when they talk about keeping the law in spirit and not in letter. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks;" (Matthew 12:34) and "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7)

A man may keep the law outwardly, and violate it really, in his heart; but it is an utter impossibility for anyone to keep the law in his heart, and violate the letter of it. So if a man keeps the fourth commandment "in his heart," if he keeps the spirit of that commandment, he will keep holy the seventh day of the week, and no other.

vs. 3: He that backbites not with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor.

Webster gives the following definition of the word "backbite": "To censure, slander, reproach, or speak evil of, in the absence of the person traduced."

Notice that according to this definition, backbiting is not necessarily speaking falsely against an absent one; the things said may be true, and yet it may be backbiting. It is speaking evil of a neighbor that is condemned. This is still farther shown by the expression.

vs. 3: nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor.

If a man commits a sin, that is a reproach to him; for Solomon says that: "Sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)

Now if one neighbor has actually done wrong, and we take up his case and make it a subject of conversation, criticizing it of course, we are backbiting. This of course does not include those instances in which a man's

case is considered by those in positions of authority, with a view to reclaiming him, or of preventing him from leading others astray.

If it is a sin to speak evil of one when the things uttered are true how much worse must it be when the reports are false? The ninth commandment says: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16)

This does not mean simply that we must not swear falsely against him in court, or that we must not at any time tell what we know is not true; but it means that we must not tell what we do not know to be true.

The man who hears something to the detriment of his neighbor, and repeats it to others, not knowing that it is true, is guilty of bearing false witness, as well as of taking up a reproach against his neighbor. The ninth commandment means a great deal more than we are apt to think it does. And so it is with all the commandments. They are, indeed "exceeding broad." (Psalm 119:96)

Here is a safe and simple rule to follow with our fellowmen: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18)

He who does this fulfills the whole law, so far as it relates to man. That means that we must be as careful of our brother's reputation as we would be of our own. When we are about to repeat something to the detriment of anyone, stop and consider whether we would like to have him repeat such a thing about us. If this rule were followed, it would shut out a great amount of gossip and slander.

For there is such a thing as going to extremes. There are proper times to speak about another, even to tell things that are to his detriment. In a court of law, a man must witness to the truth, that justice may be done. So, also, the proper authorities in the church are to be notified when a brother persists in wrong-doing. This is in the interest of good order and discipline. The Bible says: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." (Leviticus 19:17)

He who covers up wrong in another, neither trying to restore him, nor informing those who could restore him, becomes a "partaker of other men's sins." (1 Timothy 5:22)

Here is another specification:

vs. 4: In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honors them that fear the Lord.

This does not mean that we are to despise and shun sinners, nor that we are to be uncivil to anybody. We are to show "all meekness unto all men." (Titus 3:2)

And we are to be like Christ, who came to save that which was lost. While He hated sin, He was the sinner's friend, and He sought their society, not for the sake of their society, but that He might do them good.

But a "vile person," a reprobate, is not to be esteemed. Remember that the text does not discriminate. It does not say that you must despise a vile person if he is poor, but that you may honor a reprobate who is wealthy. That is the way of the world, but it is not the Lord's way. If society would adopt as a rule the fourth verse of this psalm, it would very soon be purged of a terrible load of corruption.

vs. 4: but he honors them that fear the Lord.

One of the special requirements of an elder is that he be "a lover of good men." (Titus 1:8)

And one of the sins charged against the people of the last days is that they are "despisers of those that are good." (2 Timothy 3:3)

There is to be no discrimination; the poorest and most ignorant man, if he is a God-fearing man, is worthy of more honor that the profligate prince or millionaire. There is no honor that a man can receive that will outrank the

honor which God gives, in imparting His grace to the humble. "Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

vs. 5: He that puts not out his money to usury, nor takes reward against the innocent.

By comparing this text with Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 23:19-20, we see that the entire prohibition of taking usury was only from brethren; from strangers it was allowable to receive usury. This was no injustice; for extortion or unjust gain is expressly condemned everywhere. We are commanded to "Do good to all men as we have opportunity, but especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10)

It is just for a man to receive reasonable compensation for means which represents his own labor; still the Bible clearly teaches that a man must not be a taker of usury, that is, that must not be his business.

It is almost impossible for a man to engage in the business of money lending without taking advantage of the necessities of others, and thus violating the command to love his neighbor as himself. This is why we are positively forbidden to exact usury from the poor. "And if your brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with you; then you shall relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with you. Take no usury of him, or increase: but fear your God; that yourbrother may live with you. You shall not give him your money upon usury, nor lend him your victuals for increase." (Leviticus 25:35-37) "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Timothy 6:9)

vs. 5: He that does these things shall never be moved.

Let a person live fully up to the 15th Psalm, and he will surely have eternal life. He who does so, will be a perfect man; he will fulfill all the law. "Why," says the objector, "you don't take Christ into the account of all."

Not so fast. We said that the one who should carry out the regulations laid down in Psalm 15 would have eternal life, and in so saying we only echoed the words of the inspired writer. But who can fulfill them? Says Christ, "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

The unrenewed man would find it an utter impossibility to do what is required. Even his best endeavors would come so far short of the standard as to sink him into perdition.

More than this, supposing that it were possible for a man to do in his own strength what is required; where could the person be found who has ever come anywhere near the standard? With the exception of Christ, no such person ever lived on earth. Then how much profit could one derive from his future good deeds, even if he could perform them? Not a particle.

The blood of Jesus Christ, and that alone, can cleanse from sin. He whose sins are forgiven is a new creature in Christ, and it is not till then that he can perform works that are acceptable to God. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto goodworks, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)--Signs of the Times, December 3, 1885--Original title: Comments on Psalm 15--Psalm 15:1-5.

Chapter 24

Psalm 16: God is My Inheritance

God is My Inheritance

Wednesday, June 22

"The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (Psalm 16:5)

This is what everyone receives who gives up himself. How can it be called "giving up," when infinitely more is received in return? To Abraham God said: "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

Now "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

That is, you are "heirs of God,"--not of His possessions, but of himself. Think what it means to have God for your portion,--to inherit His life and character,--until the greatness of the thought fills your soul.

A Goodly Heritage

Thursday, June 23

"The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:6)

Here we have the idea of our inheritance surveyed, and our portion allotted us. The lines have been run, and there is nothing to hinder us from taking possession of our "goodly heritage."

How extensive is it? It includes all creation; for "in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17)

This is why the Christian will not contend for his rights; there is nothing to fight for, because he has all things in God, and no one can deprive Him of God.

Immovable

Friday, June 24

"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8)

Who has power to "set the Lord" always before him? Can anybody move the Lord about at will? Can one bring the Lord down from above, and set Him at his right hand? Certainly not: but one can recognize the abiding presence, and be established by it, as no one can who does not know that the Lord is in the place.

Be sure that if God is at your right hand, He will take hold of it: that is the reason why you will not fall. No matter where we are, even though it be "in the uttermost parts of the sea," (Psalm 139:9) even there shall His right hand hold us.

Unshaken as the sacred hills,
And fixed as mountains stand,
Firm as a rock the soul shall rest.
That trusts the Almighty hand.
--Isaac Watts, The Psalms of David (1719), Psalm 125: "The Saint's Trial and Safety."

The Path of Life and Joy

Sabbath, June 25

"You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

If God is always before us, even at our right hand, and there is "fullness of joy" in His presence, surely we ought always to be full of joy. And so we should, if we only in our minds set Him always before us. Our joy is full when we have "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

This joy comes from seeing and knowing the Word of life. This is the path of life, for the living Word is both the water and the life. When God shows us the path of life, it is only that we may walk in it; and if we walk in the path of life we must surely live.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, June 1904--Psalm 16:5,6,8,11.

Chapter 25

Psalm 16: Our Inheritance

The language of the Bible is that which the Holy Spirit puts into the mouths of men. Wherever we find an expression of hope and confidence in God, or the acknowledgment of any gifts from God, no matter by whom it is written, it is an inspired statement of what it is the privilege of every man to say. It is with this fact in mind that we should read the Scriptures. With it before us, let us read: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; you maintain my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:5-6)

Think of those words, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." Truly, that is "a goodly heritage." Do you realize what it means? Surely it means nothing less than what the words say: that God himself is our inheritance. "My heart and my flesh fails; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm 73:26)

Our Saviour has taught us to call God "Our Father." Of course no one will do this unless he believes the Lord; but it is the privilege of every one who believes the Lord to call God his Father, and to know that he is a son of God. "He [Christ] came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:11-12)

In place of the word "power," in this text, we have the marginal rendering, "right or privilege." Those who believe on the name of Christ have the privilege to become the sons of God. It is not simply the right to be called the sons, but the power actually to become sons. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:14-17)

As stated above, we have not simply the privilege to be called the sons of God, but the right and power actually to be sons. The words "Father" and "son," applied to God and us, are not simply empty terms, but expressions of actual fact. The relationship between believers in God is as real as that between children and earthly parents. Let us read a few texts on this point. "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

Again we are told that the Divine power of Jesus our Lord has "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue; Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:3-4) "[We are] by nature the children of wrath," (Ephesians 2:3) because as children of Adam we are partakers of fallen human nature. Every one may truly say, with the Apostle Paul, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing," (Romans 7:18) and with David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5) "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12)

We find ourselves in this world with impulses to sin, which we are not able to resist. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17) "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

To many it seems unjust that God should hold men accountable for their deeds, and should threaten punishment to the ungodly, since we are not responsible for being brought into the world, nor for the sin and weakness which we inherited from our ancestors.

But such do not take into account the better inheritance which we have through the grace of God. The Word of God brings to us exceeding great and

precious promises. Faith in that Word effects a new birth for us, and we thus become sons of God, and partakers of the Divine nature.

That is, just as by our natural birth we inherit the weakness and sin of human nature, so by our spiritual birth through the promises of God we inherit the righteousness and strength of the Divine nature. God is our Father indeed, and the new birth is a reality, and not a figure of speech.

As by nature we inherit the tendencies and characteristics of our earthly parents, even so by grace we inherit the ways and nature of our heavenly Father. Is not that indeed "a goodly heritage"?

Think of the expression, "heirs of God." That is, as the Psalmist said, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." (Psalm 16:5)

Not merely do we inherit His property, but we inherit himself. He himself is our portion. We receive God himself. We draw our life from Him, and through faith partake of His Divine nature. God himself is our portion and our inheritance, and that includes everything that is worth having here or hereafter.

See how plainly this blessed truth is stated in the Scriptures. We know that we are born sinful, and have often felt discouraged because of it, and sometimes even inclined to reproach God for it; but let us instead thank God and take courage as we read: "As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5:18-19)

And again: "As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." (Romans 6:19)

That is to say, when we yield to God, His power works in us in just the same way that the power of sin worked in us by nature, only to a greater

degree, "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17) "[God does] exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

His plan is to give us "an abundant entrance into the kingdom." (2 Peter 1:11)

He does nothing by halves. As God is more powerful than Satan, so His righteousness is more powerful than sin, and so when we yield to Him the power that works good in us is stronger than the power that formerly worked evil in us. Surely we have no reason to waste time mourning over inherited tendencies to evil.

And God is no respecter of persons. Jesus Christ tasted death for every man. The grace of God brings this salvation to all men. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) "[Christ is] the true Light, that lights every man that comes into the world." (John 1:9)

He has not left a soul without excuse, because His grace is manifested in every soul. Although there is "no good thing" (Romans 7:18) in the flesh, there is no man who is totally depraved, because the Spirit of God works in every heart. Generous and noble traits are seen in even the worst characters,--evidences of what God is anxious to do in them all the time if they will only let Him.

The inheritance of righteousness is ours while we say further with the Psalmist, "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8)

We are made partakers of the Divine nature, and changed into the Divine image, only while we steadfastly behold the glory of God; and this glory we find in His Word.

A glory in the Word we find
When grace restores our sight.

--Unknown Hymn: The Glory of the Word. First appeared in J. Campbell's Comprehensive Hymn Book, 1837.

Jesus Christ is "the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18)

But in Him, "We have obtained an inheritance." (Ephesians 1:11)

The Father has bestowed the wonderful love upon us, "that we should be called the sons of God," (1 John 3:1) just the same as Christ himself, so that we are "joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." (Romans 8:17)

We may be in this world even as He is, (1 John 4:17) and we may know that God loves us even as He loves Christ.

Finally, we have our assurance made doubly sure when we remember that the language of the 16th Psalm applies to Christ. We know this from the last verses, which are quoted and commented on in Acts 2:25-31. It is the language of Christ himself, put by the Holy Spirit into the mouth of David. And so it is also the language of David, and if of David, then of every other man who has a mind to make it his own.

In this we see that although Christ is the only begotten Son of God, before all things, and the Creator of all things, yet He identifies himself with us, and us with Him. "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)

He became man, being "in all things made like unto His brethren," (Hebrews 2:17) so that by the grace of God we have all the advantages that He has. Everything that Christ as the Son of God inherits from the Father, is ours in like measure, if we but receive Him by faith. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7) "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15)--Present Truth, May 9, 1895--Psalm 16:5,6,8.

Chapter 26

Psalm 16: God Takes Hold of Your Hand

"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (Psalm 16:8)

Who has power to "set the Lord" always before him? Can anybody move the Lord about at will? Can one bring the Lord down from above, and set Him at His right hand?

Certainly not; but one can recognize the abiding presence, and be established by it, as no one can who does not know that the Lord is in the place. Be sure that if God is at your right hand, He will take hold of it; that is the reason why you will not fall.

No matter where we are, even though it be "in the uttermost parts of the sea," even there shall His right hand hold us. "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:9-10)

Unshaken as the sacred hills.
And fixed as mountains stand,
Firm as a rock the soul shall rest,
That trusts th'Almighty hand.
--Isaac Watts, The Psalms of David (1719), Psalm 125: "The Saint's Trial and
Safety."

--Present Truth, August 4, 1904--Psalm 16:8.

Chapter 27

Psalm 16: Joy in the Lord

I suppose that the most common idea of God is that He is gloomy and austere, and too much absorbed in the great business of managing the universe to take any pleasure. Satan likes to have men think of God as unattractive. But the fact is that God is joy itself: "In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11) "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 10:17)

Love and joy are the very first among the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy." (Galatians 5:22)

Joy is inseparable from the Lord. Therefore everyone who knows the Lord must be joyful.

When professed followers of Christ give unbelievers the idea that if they begin to serve the Lord they will have to become gloomy, they misrepresent the Lord.

The only strength of the Christian is the joy of the Lord: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)--Present Truth, August 16, 1894--Psalm 16:11.

Chapter 28

Psalm 16: The Joy of Life

The most enjoyable thing in life is life itself. The people who talk about not enjoying life, do not know what life is. Real life brings joy, because in the presence of the Lord, who is our life, there is fullness of joy. "You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

The message of eternal life is sent to us, that our joy may be full. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:1-4)

So if anybody finds himself downhearted, and "getting no enjoyment out of life," the remedy is to "lay hold on eternal life" with a firm grasp. "Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called." (1 Timothy 6:12)--Present Truth, April 18, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 16:11.

Chapter 29

Psalm 16: Fullness of Joy

"In your presence, there is fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:11)

And again he asks: "Where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7)

No one can escape from the presence of the Lord. Therefore it is not simply in heaven, but in earth also that there is fullness of joy for every one who will believe it.--Present Truth, April 30, 1903--Psalm 16:11.

Chapter 30

Psalm 17: Kept from the Paths of Death

Kept from the Paths of Death

Sunday, June 26

"Concerning the works of men, by the word of your lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalm 17:4)

In this text and the last one we have two paths set before us--the path of life and the path of the destroyer. But however many those paths of death may be, we may keep ourselves from them all by the words of the Lord's mouth, always provided that we search for and find those words and feed upon them.

Kept From Slipping

Monday, June 27

"Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not." (Psalm 17:5)

What a grand assurance this inspired prayer is that God will hold us, so that our footsteps will not slip. This He is sure to do, if we walk in His paths. This is walking with God.

How blessed to start out in the morning, too weak to stand alone, and not knowing the way that we are to go, and yet to know that all the day our feet will not slip, that we shall be led "by the right way," (Psalm 107:7) where we may "walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

Saved from Enemies

Tuesday, June 28

"Show your marvelous lovingkindness, O You that save by your right hand them which put their trust in You from those that rise up against them." (Psalm 17:7)

All that is necessary, in order that we may be comforted by this text, is for us to know the simple rendering of it as given in the margin. "God saves them that put their trust in Him, from those who rise up against His right hand." (Psalm 17:7,margin) Enemies may think that they are fighting against us, but the Lord has declared that it is He that they are rising up against, and not us. You cannot for a moment suppose that it is possible for any enemy to break down the guard of God's right hand; then why need we worry over what enemies are trying to do to us?

The Apple of the Eye

Wednesday, June 29

"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings, From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about." (Psalm 17:8-9)

The whole Bible contains no more expressive figure of safekeeping than this, that God keeps us as the apple of the eye. How closely we guard our eyes, and even though we be off our guard, it is almost impossible for a blow to come so suddenly that the eyelid will not close down to protect the eyeball. Even so carefully does God guard those who take refuge under His wings. (Psalm 57:1)

Satisfied to Look Upon God

Thursday, June 30

"I will behold your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

Note the exact wording and the punctuation of the text. It is not, as often quoted, that we shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness. That would be the expression of selfishness. The statement is that when we awake to "see Him as He is," (1 John 3:2) we shall be so satisfied with the sight that we shall have no desire to look at anything else. Our highest bliss, our greatest reward, will be that we shall see His face.

But unless we learn to discern His countenance here, and get some glimpses of His beauty, we cannot know that the fullness of His glory will be all-satisfying. It is what we see now that makes us want to see Him constantly.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, June 1904--Psalm 17:4,5,8,9,15.

Chapter 31

Psalm 17: Can God Defend Himself?

"Show your marvelous lovingkindness, O You that save by your right hand them which put their trust in You from those that rise up against them." (Psalm 17:7)

This is very comforting, for:

"The right hand of the Lord does valiantly." (Psalm 118:16)

But if you will look at the marginal reading you will find an exact translation of the Hebrew of the last part of this verse, which is much stronger than the paraphrase which the translators thought best to put in the body of the text. Thus we may read it:

"Show [or, make distinguished, prominent] your loving-kindness, O You that save them which trust in You from those that rise up against your right hand."

God counts every attack on us as directed against himself, and so it indeed is, since "in Him we live." (Acts 17:28)

Then the oft-repeated, and oftener thought query, "Can God save me?" may be changed for, "Can God successfully defend himself?"

But to ask such a question is to answer it, and so there is an end to doubt and fear. What a blessed thing it is to know that our life is "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord," (1 Samuel 25:29) and is as safe as His.--Present Truth, September 5, 1901--Psalm 17:7.

Chapter 32

Psalm 18: The Lord Our Refuge

The accompanying picture is a striking likeness of an ancient stronghold, as those who have seen many of the ruined castles of Europe can testify. Situated upon the very summit of a solitary peak, the sides of which were almost as steep as the walls of the castle itself, such a stronghold was almost inaccessible to an enemy.

Very similar to a castle represented in the cut, is the Wartburg, in Germany. It was to this castle that Luther was carried by his friends, when he was returning from the Diet at Worms, an outlaw because of the faith; and in it he was kept for ten months, in order that he might be preserved from his enemies, who sought to take his life.

The castle had been a familiar sight to Luther in his boyhood, for he had attended school in Eisenach, at the foot of the mountain; and it was doubtless this castle that prompted his notable hymn, "Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott." (In English: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God")

For God is represented in the Bible as a high tower, and a strong place of refuge, into which men may flee for safety. Thus we read, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and it is safe." (Proverbs 18:10) "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strong rock, in Him will I trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalm 18:2)

In the passage last quoted, the word "trust," is from the word which in many places in the Revised Version is translated "take refuge." This is strictly literal, and makes the picture much more vivid. We shall so render it in the passages that follow. So the text ought to read: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strong rock, in Him will I take refuge." (Psalm 18:2,RV)

This is in keeping with the idea expressed in Proverbs 18:10, above quoted. In the 18th Psalm we read: "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield unto them that take refuge in Him." (Psalm 18:30)

Just as Luther found refuge in the Wartburg from the enemies who would have taken his life, so we may find protection in the Lord, from the enemies of our souls. Read: "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! You shall hide them in the secret of your presence from the pride of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the Lord; for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city." (Psalm 31:19-21)

Take notice that those who take refuge in the Lord are to be kept in the secret of His presence from the pride of man. Not from the pride of men, but from the pride of man,--from human pride; that is, each one from his own pride. It is pride that causes man's destruction: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

But the Lord is meek and lowly in heart: "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." (Matthew 11:29)

And those who take refuge in Him are protected from the destruction of pride by being encompassed with His humility. They are partakers of His righteousness, which is salvation.

Still further, they are to be kept secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. No man can be injured by any strife of tongues, in which his own tongue does not partake. The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. "It sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." (James 3:6)

But from this the Lord offers a sure refuge. The tongue of the man that is in Him, will not utter both blessing and cursing, but will "bless the Lord at all times," (Psalm 34:1) saying, "Blessed be the Lord; for He has shown me

His marvelous loving kindness and a strong city." (Psalm 31:21) "How precious is your loving kindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of your wings." (Psalm 36:7)

Again, read these comforting words: "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shallyou trust; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." (Psalm 91:1-4)

And again: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusts in You; yea, in the shadow of your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performs all things for me." (Psalm 57:1-2)

Earthly castles could never afford a perfectly safe refuge, for there was a possibility of their being taken; but, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever. Here is another comforting assurance:" (Psalm 125:1-2) "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him." (Nahum 1:7)

We read that the wicked "plots against the righteous, and gnashes upon him with his teeth; ... [But] the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble. And the Lord helps them, and rescues them; He rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in Him." (Psalm 37:12,39-40)

These things are not figures of speech, but they are real. Even now we may know that the presence of the Lord to protect is as real as any stone wall that was ever built, and infinitely more safe. And the blessedness of the whole thing is that anyone may have this refuge.

Faith will build a wall of defense as high as heaven itself,--defense not merely from spiritual foes, but from physical ones as well. But faith is shown by confidence and rejoicing. He who fears has not faith, because fear is born of doubt. So the Psalmist says to the Lord, "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7)

Just as the people of Israel were saved from an overwhelming force, when they began to sing, saying, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures for ever," (2 Chronicles 20:21) so the people of God will always be delivered when they sing songs of faith and praise. Therefore in the time of greatest danger they sing, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." (Isaiah 12:2)--Present Truth, November 9, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 18:2,30.

Chapter 33

Psalm 18: A Sure Defense

"The Lord is my Rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalm 18:2)

How may one experience the ample security which these words set forth? All can see that the man who is able to truthfully describe his position in such language could not ask to be in a safer place. How then can we get into it?

Notice that it is the Lord himself who is a rock and a fortress. Whoever then possesses the Lord, has, in Him, the shelter from all evil. This is true of every good thing offered to men by the Gospel. Not one blessing can be had apart from the Lord, and the Lord cannot be received without receiving every spiritual blessing." (Ephesians 1:3)

[God] has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

We should not conclude from this that it is a very difficult thing to get a blessing from the Lord, since it is just as hard to get a single blessing as it is to get the fullness of God. Let us view the matter on the right side, and rejoice that it is just as simple and easy to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be kept from falling as it is to get the single blessing which we have often proved it so easy to seek and find. When we might just as well have all that God has to give, it is dishonoring to Him to be content with so little. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Colossians 1:19)

And He in whom the fullness dwells is a free gift to sinners. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," (John 3:16) and, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

There is a deep and wonderful significance in the words we read so often, and so unthinkingly, "I am the Lord your God." (Exodus 6:7)

But is the Lord ours in a practical way, so that we may really benefit by the fullness that dwells in Him? Is He not inaccessible for all practical purposes, by reason of His being in heaven while we are on the earth? No. "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" (Romans 10:6-7)

Why are we forbidden to say this in our heart? Because right there is Christ himself, the living Word of God. "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart." (Romans 10:8)

So let your mouth and heart agree to it, so that you may not deny Christ, but confess Him. "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:9) "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23) "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, ... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matthew 15:18-19)

Now if Christ live in the heart, and a man be willing to be a witness to that fact, it is evident that the fountain will send forth pure waters. The issues of the life will be the issues of Christ's life. "We shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10) "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10)

In the same way, God, as our Rock, is brought into the life. We do not need, when we realize the necessity of protection, to go somewhere to find the fortress. We are already safe inside, for God himself is the fortress, and "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

The only thing that can endanger us is to forget that we are in the fortress, and so be deceived into trying to find the protection in some other place. "Of the Rock that begat you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed you." (Deuteronomy 32:18)

The man who knows that God is his fortress will abide in Him, and so have his mind at rest, in spite of all the foes that vainly rage outside. "In You, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. ... Be my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress. ... I am as a wonder unto many; but You are my strong refuge." (Psalm 71:1,3,7)

This is not true of a favored few only, God has given commandment to save all men, but many will not yield obedience. He is a rock to all, but some only stumble over it, through unbelief, and to them it becomes a rock of offense. It is available for all as a refuge. "Lord, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations." (Psalm 90:1) "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God,in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)

We are not to limit these statements by saying that they are spiritual, for this fact does not limit them at all. It gives them the widest possible scope. Men have thought that they could have spiritual blessings without these affecting their temporal condition and circumstances for good, but this was because they did not understand the real nature of the spiritual blessings. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." (Romans 8:11)

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, such liberty as Christ had by the Spirit, and, by the Spirit, He had such superabundance of liberty that He was not merely free himself, but He went about delivering the captives, opening the prisons, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

So we, when we experience the spiritual security that comes by dwelling in the fortress, are delivered at the same time from physical evil. "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. ... There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." (Psalm 91:7,10)

This is because God is the dwelling himself. "Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation." (Psalm 91:9)

But if the Lord has been our dwelling-place in all generations, how is it that evils befall us? Because we choose them, and God will always respect our choice. It is true we do not want death, but we want the sin which, when it is finished, brings forth death.

When we are willing that the Lord shall make an end of sin, root as well as branch, He will do it speedily. His command is, "Abide in me." (John 15:4,7)

And this abiding in Him, which secures us from spiritual enemies, will give us the same safety that Christ himself, our dwelling-place, enjoys against every form of evil. "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." (Deuteronomy 32:4)--Present Truth, March 30, 1899--Psalm 18:2.

Chapter 34

Psalm 18: A Large Place

"He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me; for they were too strong for me. They prevented me in the day of my calamity; but the Lord was my stay. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me." (Psalm 18:17-19)

Again, in Psalm 31, we read, "I will be glad and rejoice in your mercy; for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities; And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room. Once more:" (Psalm 31:7-8) "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." (Psalm 118:5)

What is this "large place" in which the Lord sets those at liberty to call upon Him and put their trust in Him? and how large is it? A few texts of Scripture will tell us. In the 1st chapter of the Ephesians the apostle prays by the Spirit that we may be enlightened to "know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power toward us who believe." (Ephesians 1:18)

In the tenth and eleventh verses we are told that it is in Christ that we obtain this inheritance; and in the 2nd chapter (verses 4-10) we learn that we are made partakers of the inheritance in Christ because of the great love wherewith God loved us. Now read the sum of the whole matter in one of the most wonderful prayers ever uttered: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is 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 fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14-19)

Here we have set before us the "large place," and the size of it. The large place is the love of God which passes knowledge.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind.
--Frederick William Faber, There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, 1862.

But the size of it? Well, that is a thing that it will take us all eternity to discover. As soon as we are rooted and grounded in love, we may begin to comprehend with all saints what is "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," so as to know the love of God in Christ for us.

Take your stand wherever you please, and begin the measurement. First, the breadth. Measure both ways from you, as far as there is any breadth. Where will you stop? There will be no stopping place, for space is as infinite as God himself. So it must be with the length. The depth and height likewise. There is no limit. The inheritance, and the riches of the glory of it, which belongs to the saints, is the whole universe.

This is all in Christ, in whom we have redemption, "For in Him were all things created, and the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV) "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." (Revelation 21:7)

But as we are even now to know what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance, which we now obtain in Christ, it is a fact that the large place which God sets us in, so that we may be free, is the boundless universe which His love has prepared for us. The Psalmist said, "I will walk at liberty; for I seek your precepts." (Psalm 119:45)

And here we have before us "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." (Romans 8:21)

Here is room in which the mind can expand. Who is it that presumes to say that the religion of Jesus Christ is narrow?--Present Truth, November 8, 1894--Psalm 18:17-19.

Chapter 35

Psalm 18: The Heavenly Way

"As for God, His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

God's way is perfect, no matter in what it is revealed. Because of the curse it is not seen in the earth as it should be; yet in spite of the curse, where God in some measure has His way, we can see His perfection. Look at the flowers of the field. There we see, the glory of God's life. Solomon in all his greatness was not arrayed like a lily of the field.

God's way for us all is a perfect way. It is the best way; and when we accept it, and submit to it, that is the best way for us. Sin came into the world, and marred the perfect work of God. The Gospel is designed to bring back to every one who will receive it the perfection of God's way for man.

To accept it in reality, to make it a living experience in our lives, bridges over the gulf between us and God, sets up a living connection between earth and heaven, and makes it possible for the heavenly way for man to be brought into our earthly life in so large a measure that through us it can be revealed to others.

Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come, your will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

That should be the prayer of every follower of Christ. The way God's will is done in heaven is revealed in: "Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto His word." (Psalm 103:20)

If the Lord's word had always been hearkened to, there would never have been any departure from the right. It is because another word was hearkened to instead of the Lord's, that all the imperfection has come into the world. Much of the burden and of the suffering we have to bear, might be avoided if we would but accept the heavenly way of living.

Christ upon earth was the embodiment, the incarnation, of the heavenly way. He came to make it possible that the way could be revealed in us in our treatment of our fellow-men, no matter who they might be, nor what their condition. He had compassion on those who were in distress, and it was this that led Him to die for the world. The same spirit in anyone will reveal itself in the same way--he will be touched with the woes of others, and like the Master will go about doing good. But it is said, "Oh this is all well enough for Christ--He was the Son of God."

Yes, but hear Him: "I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, He does the works." (John 14:10)

We can take courage in this, that what Jesus did, was in just such flesh as ours; and as God through Him wrought great things, so we can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." (Philippians 41:13)

We are to take God's word as the guide and the power of life, regardless of fashion or what anyone may say or think. When God's way is revealed to us, it is our duty to accept it no matter what it involves. We are to obey, let the consequences be what they may. But you say, "This is an old-fashioned Gospel, and is not in vogue much today."

True; but it is just what God is calling upon every one to accept. This does not mean that God is a hard master, insisting that we give up that which is for our good. No; but rather He asks us to abstain from the things that are death to us, and accept what will be life to us. It is the way of the transgressor that is hard, (Proverbs 13:15) not God's way. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30)

The way that God would have us take, we can find in His word. When it is found, by the grace of God follow it, for it will bring heaven to earth, and make life a success.--Present Truth, September 13, 1900--Psalm 18:30.

Chapter 36

Psalm 19: The Witness of the Heavens

"The heavens declare the glory of God." (Psalm 19:1)

In their ever-changing beauty, the sunny days and starry nights show forth "the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge." (Job 37:16)

Nor does the firmament reveal Him only as a Being of infinite power, at the thought of whom the inhabitants of the earth should tremble. "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5) "Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens." (Psalm 89:2)

So morning by morning as we rise from our sleep, and behold the rays of the sun once more, its beams bring the glad message that "the mercy of the Lord endures" still. What a blessed thought with which to begin the day! That which smites upon our eyelids in the summer mornings and gently calls us from slumber is the greeting of the heavens, bidding us be of good cheer, whatever the day may bring, for since God's mercy is over us still,"as your days, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25) "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

If we be conscious of unworthiness, of sinful deeds and stubborn hearts, still the sun shines even to us, and thereby we learn that the mercy and faithfulness which the heavens reveal, are not yet worn out for us. "He is kind unto the unthankful." (Luke 6:35) "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good." (Matthew 5:45)

And therein, Christ taught, He loves them that hate Him.

Now when the sun gets on the horizon, may we think that the powers of darkness prevail, and the evidence of His faithfulness grows dim. But

throughout the twenty-four hours He leaves not himself without witness. To those who fear that their way is hid from the Lord, and that His watchcare is withdrawn, He says: "Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking." (Isaiah 40:26)

As far as the lights of heaven shine, so far goes the message of God's mercy. As unsearchable as the expanse of heaven is the length and breadth and height and depth of His infinite love; and as free as is the vision of God's glory to the eyes of men, is the free gift of "the righteousness [which is the glory of God], ... unto all and upon all them that believe." (Romans 3:22) "Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night. ... If those ordinances depart from before me, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done." (Jeremiah 31:35-37) "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:8)

Those who have believed God's promise and trust Him for salvation, need never fear that He will suffer His faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips, (Psalm 89:33-34) so long as they can see the sun and moon in the heavens; for "His seed shall endure for ever, and His throne as the sun beforeme. It shall be established for ever as the moon." (Psalm 89:36-37)

Then so long as men have reason to think that the morning will bring them the sunlight, and night be made beautiful with stars, they have no less reason to be confident that He whom they have believed, will keep that which they have committed unto Him.--Present Truth, July 7, 1898--Psalm 19:1.

Chapter 37

Psalm 19: God's Judgments

We are so accustomed to associate the word "judgment" with the idea of condemnation and punishment, that we lose thereby the beauty and force and comfort of some Scripture passages. For instance, the expression, "His judgments are in all the earth," (Psalm 105:7) conveys to some minds only the idea that the earth is full of calamities because of man's transgression. As an offset to this extremely limited idea of God's judgments, read: "The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether; More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm 19:9-10)

The Lord's judgments are sweet, and greatly to be desired; and "His judgments are in all the earth." Indeed it is by His judgments that the earth exists, and that all things continue.

God's judgment means perfection for everything that He has made that will submit to it, He has made all things, and provided for all things that He has made, in the way which, according to His perfect judgment, is the very best. The evidences of this are seen in all the earth. When God created the world:

• He comprehended its dust in a measure, and determined the necessary sum of it. (Proverbs 8:26,RV,margin)

• He weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in the balances of His justice, and proportioned them all according to His judgment.

• He measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with a span.

In this connection we read: "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment?" (Isaiah 40:14)

So in the waters, in the heavens, in the mountains and hills, and even in every grain of dust, we may see His judgments. Much more are they manifest in the perfectly organized animate creation. We stand "between two infinities":

Boundless inward, in the atom,
Boundless outward, in the whole.
--Alfred Lord Tennyson, Locksley Hall Sixty Years After.

The infinitely minute perfection of His judgment is revealed by the microscope, and something of the infinite length, and breadth, and depth, and height of it, by the telescope.

God's laws are spoken of as His judgments, because in them He prescribes for our guidance that way of life, which infinite wisdom sees to be the right, the best, and the only way of prosperity for man.

Let us then, with the Psalmist, regard them as more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than the honeycomb.--Present Truth, January 29, 1903--Psalm 19:9-10.

Chapter 38

Psalm 19: The Present Reward

Filled with the Spirit of truth, the Psalmist David said of the commandments of God: "In keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:11)

This is the way the Lord would have us look at the matter, but it is not the common view even among professed Christians, and for this reason so many people of the world are repulsed from accepting the Gospel.

They receive a false impression of what it is. They get the idea from much of the talk of Christians, that the Christian life consists in "giving up" everything that is pleasant, and is one continual grind of stern "duty," the word being supposed to signify the doing of disagreeable things because one is obliged to.

But that is not Christianity at all. The commandments of God are "not grievous." (1 John 5:3)

They are on the contrary, "More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psalm 19:10)

They are not something hard that we are obliged to do now, in the hope of receiving something by and by that will make up for the hardships endured. There is ample reward in the very doing of them. The law of God is his life, and nobody can do it except by the life of Christ--"God with us" (Matthew 1:23)--in him; but the life of the Lord brings "fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:11)

Every unconverted person imagines that there is no pleasure except in a life of self-indulgence, and that to become a Christian is to give up life; but whoever accepts the Lord learns that he never before knew what life is.

The superabundant goodness of God is shown in this, that in the very keeping of His commandments, however contrary they may be to the desires

of the natural man, there is a reward beyond all calculation, for all the joy of the redeemed in eternity is simply the joy that comes from the righteous life of God in them.--Present Truth, July 5, 1900--Psalm 19:10-11.

Chapter 39

Psalm 20: Prayers Answered in Time of Trouble

Prayers Answered in Time of Trouble

Monday, August 1

"The Lord hear you in the day of trouble." (Psalm 20:1)

The Revised Version renders the Hebrew of this verse accurately thus: "The Lord answer you in the day of trouble. Often in the Bible we have the word "hear" in the place of "answer." This is not really inaccurate; for with the Lord to hear prayer is to answer it; just as for us to hear His voice is to obey. Do not forget that this expression of desire that the Lord will hear us is God's own word, and therefore a promise that He will." (Psalm 20:1,RV)

Especially noteworthy is the assurance that He will answer us in the day of trouble. Not only will God answer the prayers offered in tribulation, but prayers that in time of prosperity may have seemed unheeded by Him will often in time of trouble be answered in a marvelous manner.

Strengthened Above Enemies

Tuesday, August 2

"The name of the God of Jacob defend you." (Psalm 20:1)

Note the marginal reading, as well as the Revised Version, where in place of "defend you" we have the stronger expression, "set you up on high." The Hebrew word is defined: "to set up on high, to exalt, to make powerful."

So the promise is not merely that we shall be protected from assaults, but that we shall be made powerful, "endued with power from on high," (Luke 24:49) and placed above our enemies. The name of the Lord will do this, for: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." (Psalm 18:10)

Strengthened Within

Wednesday, August 3

"[The Lord] send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion." (Psalm 20:2)

Read this verse, and each succeeding verse in succession with all that precedes, and note how the promise accumulates.

Here we have a corroboration of the statement that the Lord defends us not merely by enclosing us with a wall of defense, but by making us strong to carry on aggressive warfare against our enemies. Of course this is not our own strength, for "power belongs unto God;" (Psalm 62:11) but He supports us, as the margin has it, so that His strength for us is the same as though it were inherent in us. God and human flesh unite to make the perfect man. All that we have comes from Him, and all that He has is ours.

Our Offerings Made Fat

Thursday, August 4

"[The Lord] remember all your offerings, and accept the burnt sacrifice." (Psalm 20:3)

But you say, "I haven't anything to offer Him."

True, and that is just what the text contemplates; for here again the marginal reading gives the literal rendering of the Hebrew as "make fat" your burnt sacrifice. "The altar ... sanctifies the gift;" (Matthew 23:19) that which is in itself worthless becomes valuable when given to God, which takes the waste, refuse matter that we cast upon the ground, and from it builds beautiful flowers and nourishing food. So...

Fear not to enter His courts in the slenderness
Of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;
For truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
These are the offerings to lay on His shrine.
These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
He will accept for the Name that is dear.
--John S. B. Monsell, Hymns of Love and Praise, "O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness," 1863.

Righteous Asking

Friday, August 5

"[The Lord] grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel." (Psalm 20:4)

Truly God is a most indulgent Father, for nothing that His children ask Him is denied. Even "the rebellious also," (Psalm 68:18) have their heart's desire. Even in everlasting punishment people will get only what they have actually worked for. What a responsibility this places upon us! When God gives us, carte blanche, as it were, allowing us to have what we will, it becomes us to give great consideration to what we ask for. Far better is it for us to waive our privilege, and say:

"Not what I will, but what You will." (Luke 22:42)

Then we shall fare infinitely better than if we insisted on choosing for ourselves, for God's choice for us is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

Rejoicing in God's Victory

Sabbath, August 6

"We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners." (Psalm 20:5)

For "rejoice," the Revised Version has "triumph," and gives us in the margin the alternative reading of "victory" for "salvation." This suggests the truth that our triumph is not simply in the fact that God saves us, but is in the victory that He himself gains over His foes. His victory is ours; Christ, who conquered death, says: "Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19)

Gesenius, in his lexicon, quotes the second part of this verse, and renders it: "In honor of our God we will set up banners."

Thus the element of selfishness is entirely removed. God is the one whose victory is most important; our interest and attention are wholly absorbed in Him; and while we celebrate His fame, we ourselves are saved.

Fulfilling Our Petitions

Sunday, August 7

"The Lord fulfill all your petitions." (Psalm 20:5)

When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he said: "For that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." (Genesis 41:32)

Then how certain it must be that we cannot ask for anything that God will not grant us, since the assurances to that effect are so many times multiplied. What great need there is of taking heed how and for what we ask.

Saving His Anointed

Monday, August 8

"Now know I that the Lord saves His anointed." (Psalm 20:6)

This is a matter of positive knowledge; there is no room for doubt that "the Lord saves His anointed," because He has already done it.

When the heathen raged, and the people imagined extravagant things, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against Christ, plotting to destroy Him, (Psalm 2:1-3; Acts 4:25-28) God set Him upon His holy hill of Zion, (Psalm 2:6) "Far above all principality, and power." (Ephesians 1:21)

Now remember that "you have an unction from the Holy One," (1 John 2:20) and that therefore, as the anointed of Jehovah, your salvation is as sure as that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Receiving to Give

Tuesday, August 9

"The Lord will answer him [His anointed, whoever it may be] from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand." (Psalm 20:6)

God is very practical in His answers: He answers with His strong right hand. With Him, to hear is to answer, and to answer is to do. This is for God's anointed--those who are consecrated, set apart, to Him.

In this connection we are reminded of the fact that the Hebrew of "consecrate" is to fill the hand. When God consecrates one as priest, He fills His hand. God's hands are always filled with good things, and when He opens them He fills the hands of His anointed ones,--His children,--that they also may be ready to distribute.

Force versus Faith

Wednesday, August 10

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember [make mention of] the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen but we are risen, and stand upright." (Psalm 20:7-8)

Here we see contrasted the result of trusting in chariots and horses--the strength of nations--and of trusting in the name of the Lord.

Those who trust in that which, because it is visible, appeals to them as the most practical means of help, suffer a double fall; while those who call on the name of the Lord are raised from where they had fallen.

Take the name of Jesus ever
As a shield from every snare;
When temptations round you gather,
Breathe that holy name in prayer.
--Lydia Odell Baxter (1809-1874), Hymn: Take the Name of Jesus With You.

God is Listening

Thursday, August 11

"Save, Lord: let the king hear us when we call." (Psalm 20:9)

Truly the Lord will hear us when we call, because He is listening. God is anxiously listening, not to hear the evil that we say, but to hear the slightest whisper of an appeal to Him. In listening, He is compelled to hear many things that are wicked, but these are not what He is listening for.

When we call to Him, it is because He has first called to us. Shall we not take heed that He hears only what He is listening for?--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, August 1904--Psalm 20:1-9.

Chapter 40

Psalm 20: Some Thoughts

"The Lord hear you in the day of trouble." (Psalm 20:1)

In the Revision, as in other translations, we have the word "answer," in the place of "hear." That is the exact rendering of the Hebrew. The Hebrew Lexicon gives the following in the definition of the Hebrew word which in this verse is rendered "hear" in our version:

To answer, to respond; of one who answers to another calling--to call back--which the Hebrews did by the word hinni, which means, "Behold me," or "Here am I."

Remember that this is not simply a pious wish on the part of David, that the Lord may hear us in the day of trouble, but it is a promise of the Holy Spirit, who spoke by him, and whose word was in his tongue. (2 Samuel 23:2) One of the offices of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how to pray, and what to pray for, and this He does by bringing to our minds promises and statements of what God is willing and anxious to do for us. "The Spirit itself makes intercession for us ... according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

Now we know that when we ask anything according to His will He hears us, and grants us the things we ask for. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we knowthat we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

Therefore we know that whenever in praying to God we use the language of the Spirit of God, our requests are already granted. True prayer is to remind God of His promises, or rather, to claim them as our own. And there are many more promises in the Bible than most people are aware of.

So in this first verse of the psalm, we have the promise that when we are in trouble, and call upon the Lord, "He will say, Here I am." (Isaiah 58:9)

As He elsewhere says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Psalm 50:15)

He will not simply answer from afar, nor will He promise to come to us; but He will let us know that He is already close by, and has been near all the time. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

So in Isaiah 43:2, properly rendered, "When you pass through the water, I am with you." (Isaiah 43:2)

He is always the "I AM," as well as the One who is to be. But who may claim this promise? Whom does the Lord promise to hear? There is no limit; the only qualification is that one shall call upon Him. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

It matters not that they have brought the trouble upon themselves. "[He] gives to all liberally, and upbraids not." (James 1:5)

Read in Psalm 107, that: "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High, Cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and shadow of death, and broke their bands asunder." (Psalm 107:10-11,13-14)

Read further also that: "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near untothe gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses." (Psalm 107:17-19)

Let no one fear that, because his own foolishness has brought him into trouble, therefore the Lord will not hear and help him.

vs. 1: The name of the Lord of Jacob defend you.

Here is another promise that the Spirit gives us. It is an assurance that God's name will protect us. Why, even a man's name is often sufficient to guarantee one's safety; how much more, then, the name of God! If one is traveling through a hostile country, the name of the ruler of that country will protect him from violence. God's name is known in all the earth; even the devils tremble at it; and if in any part of the earth it is not recognized, as was the case with Pharaoh, then God is able to make it known in a way that it will be recognized.

What is the name of "the God of Jacob"? Read Exodus 3:13-15, where we learn that the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is "I Am That I Am." (Exodus 3:14) "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

That is, His name is The One Who Is Present. He is the One who is always at hand to defend. And He is able to protect, because: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

That name is also: "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exodus 34:6) "The name of the God of Jacob defend you." (Psalm 20:1)

Better still, as in the margin in the Revision, "The name of the God of Jacob set you up on high," (Psalm 20:1,RV) or on a high place. "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock, and now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about." (Psalm 27:5-6)

Our enemies throng round us, and press upon us, and God places us up out of their reach. He even makes us "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 2:6) "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." (Ephesians 1:21)

vs. 2: Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion.

What help will He send from the sanctuary? Round about the throne of God in heaven are "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels;" (Revelation 5:11) they are "mighty in strength," (Psalm 103:20) and they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Hebrews 1:14)

Of those who trust the Lord, Jesus said that: "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

So there is a direct communication between earth and heaven, because "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

Moreover, the number sent to any person may be increased indefinitely; for Jesus assures us that the Father loves us just the same as He does Him, (John 17:28) and when one of His disciples was proceeding to defend Him with carnal weapons, He said, "Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more then twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53)

There is abundance of help in the sanctuary for those who put their trust in the Lord. Why should anyone desire any other protection than this?

Very much is said just now about governmental protection of missionaries in China. To their honor be it said that none of this talk comes from them. We have not heard that any missionary has been petitioning his government for protection. Neither have any complaints come from them, that they have not been sufficiently protected.

If they made such complaints, they would be unworthy the name of missionaries of Christ. He sends them forth, and He is fully able to protect them. Those who are sent out by earthly governments may consistently look to those governments for protection; but those who are sent out by the God of heaven, should not dishonor Him by implying that He is not able to defend His own, but that His servants must depend upon earthly power. "The

Gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15) can never be helped by any weapon in the hands of man. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Christ is a King, above all the kings of the earth. But His kingdom is not of this world, therefore His servants cannot fight. (John 17:36) When Peter thought to defend His Lord with a sword, Jesus said, "Put up again your sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

If the sword could not be used in defense of the Lord himself, how can it be used in support of His work or His servants? It is utterly impossible; it may be unwisely drawn in their behalf, but always to their disadvantage. The servants of the Lord are forbidden to fight, for He says, "I say unto you, That you resist not evil," (Matthew 5:39) meaning, of course, evil done to us. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay says the Lord. ... Overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:19,21)

But since they cannot fight even in their own defense, it is very evident that they cannot ask others to fight for them. What is the result of trusting in earthly powers, as compared with trusting in the Lord? Here is the answer:

vs. 7: Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

vs. 8: They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright.

They who trust in chariots and horses are overthrown, while the ones who trust in the name of the Lord are made to stand. So we see that it is not an arbitrary thing, but simply the statement of a natural consequence, when the Lord says, by the prophet, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm,and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is

the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadsout her roots by the river." (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

vs. 5: We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners; the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

A banner is an ensign, a standard, something round which to rally. What then is the banner that is to be set up in the name of our God? "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign for the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)

Let Christ be lifted up as "the Prince of peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Let His servants be content to preach "Christ and Him crucified," (1 Corinthians 2:2) and they will prove that the power of the cross is saving power. Spiritual power, do you say? Yes, certainly; but the greater includes the less. He who is able to save from "all the power of the enemy," (Luke 10:19) meaning the devil, is certainly able to save from all earthly foes. Very well, we have learned the lesson:

vs. 6: Now know I that the Lord saves His Anointed; He will hear Him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.

That is power enough on our side, for "the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." (Psalm 118:15)

"But," someone will say, "this promise is to the Lord's Anointed, meaning Christ."

Very true, and since He sends His servants forth just as the Father sent Him forth, (John 20:21) with the very same message, and clothed with the same authority, (2 Corinthians 5:19-20) it is very evident that the same protection that the Father accorded to Him will be granted to us, if we continue to be identified with Him. When we truly pray in the name of Jesus,

it is the same as if Jesus himself were praying, and we may be as sure of being heard as He was.

Notice that this very thing appears in the psalm. The promise that the Lord hears His Anointed from His holy heaven, is the same as that which is in the first and second verses, and which is unlimited in its application. Christ was on this earth in man's place. "[He was] made in all things like unto His brethren." (Hebrews 2:17)

He had originally every advantage over man. But He "emptied himself," (Philippians 2:7,RV) when He came to earth, so that as man He had no advantage that the weakest son of Adam may not have. As He was heard and protected, so may we be. He said to the Father, "You hear me always." (John 11:42)

So we have the wonderful promise,

vs. 4: [The Lord] grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.

This is a large order. "If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:14)

Lastly we may consider the promise that the Lord will...

vs. 3: Remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice; Selah.

No wonder the Psalmist here inserted "selah," which means "silence," as much as to say, "Stop a little, and think of that."

Instead of "accept your burnt sacrifices," read the more literal rendering, "makes fat your sacrifice." The offerings that we bring to the Lord are poor at the best. We can bring nothing to Him except that which He gives to us.

When the Jew of old offered a lamb as sacrifice, he was required to bring the best of the flock. But if he had a large flock of fine animals, it was simply because the Lord had given them to him, and made them fat. So that however much he might give, he must say with David, "All things come of You, and of your own have we given You." (1 Chronicles 29:14)

But his neighbor, a poor man, would have but little to bring. His flock might be small and feeble. Nevertheless if he brought the best he had, the same God who had made the other man's offering fat would count his as fat also. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not." (2 Corinthians 8:12)

This is shown in the case of the widow's two mites. The rich men cast large sums into the treasury, out of their abundance, and she dropped only two mites, equal to a farthing. But it was all she had, and Jesus said, "This poor widow has cast in more than they all." (Luke 21:3)

The loving heart and the willing mind make the gift of value, for in the mere offering itself, no matter how great the amount, there is nothing that is of any real value, nothing that can add to His store. He requires an offering from us, not for His benefit, but for ours.

This is our encouragement when we offer Him ourselves, the only offering that He desires; since without the gift of ourselves any other offering is mockery. So we will, with a sincere heart, give ourselves, including all that we have. But what is the value of the gift? "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (Psalm 39:5)

We are poor, vile, and worthless. But here comes in the blessedness of giving ourselves to the Lord: He takes our offering, and makes it good. That which was but a disgrace, becomes transformed as soon as He looks upon it, and is found to be "to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:12)

Then whatever earthly things there are that men think worthy of confidence, let us make mention only of the name of the Lord our God.--

Present Truth, October 10, 1895--Original title: Some Thoughts from Psalm XX--Psalm 20:1-8.

Chapter 41

Psalm 21: God Save the King!

"The king shall joy in your strength, O Lord; and in your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. For You prevent him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of You, and You gave it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in your salvation; honor and majesty have You laid upon him. For You have made him exceeding glad with your countenance. For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved." (Psalm 21:1-7)

In this portion of Scripture we have the assurance that the prayer so often uttered, "God save the king!" (1 Samuel 10:24) is not a vain one. "The Lord saves His anointed." (Psalm 20:6)

The king's glory and rejoicing are only in the salvation of God; for the grace of God brings salvation, and no one is indeed king except by the grace of God.

The words, "Edward VII by the grace of God king," etc., are more than a mere formula. They express a most solemn truth; for it is indeed a serious matter to be in a position of so great influence and responsibility as is the one who stands with the eyes of a great nation upon him.

The Sacred History reveals to us the fact that kings never come to the throne except to carry out some part of God's great plan, and that when they have performed their appointed service, or have shown their unwillingness to serve God, He has removed them. "He removes kings, and sets up kings." (Daniel 2:21) "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will." (Daniel 4:25)

This is true not merely of kings over God's chosen people,--of men who knew the true God,--but of heathen who never heard His name. To

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the prophet Daniel said, "The God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all." (Daniel 2:37-38)

God himself sent by the prophet Jeremiah a special message to the kings of many lands, saying, "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon theground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant." (Jeremiah 27:5-6)

And all nations and kings were commanded to serve him. A refusal to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as King was regarded by God as disloyalty to himself; but this did not give him authority to put himself in place of God, or to regard himself as anything else than God's instrument.

In the 10th chapter of Isaiah we read, "O Assyrian, the rod of my anger, and the staff in their hand is my indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he means not so, neither does his heart think so." (Isaiah 10:5-7)

The Assyrian king's idea was that he was ruling by his own power; but God characterized his action thus: "Shall the ax boast against him that hews therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shakes it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood." (Isaiah 10:15)

Just as God used the king of Assyria as an instrument to execute His judgment upon a faithless nation, so He did the king of Babylon, saying, "I was wroth with my people, I have polluted my inheritance, and given them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; upon the ancient have you very heavily laid your yoke." (Isaiah 47:6)

And because the king of Babylon did not, like God, mingle mercy with judgment, God took the kingdom from him. In like manner we read of the king who conquered Babylon: "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; ... I have even called you by your name; I have surnamed you, though you have not known me." (Isaiah 45:1,4)

Because the king "is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil, We must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Romans 13:4-5)

Therefore it is that we are exhorted to: "Fear God; honor the king." (1 Peter 2:17)

He who does not honor the king, even though it be a heathen king,--the tyrant Nero, who ruled in the days of Peter and Paul,--does not truly fear God and keep His commandments. When ancient Israel were carried captive to Babylon, God's message to them was: "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace." (Jeremiah 29:8)

Anarchy and anarchists can find no sympathy or support in the Word of God.

It is for these reasons that the coronation today is not only a gorgeous spectacle but a solemn ceremony. How great its import, none but He who rules over all, working all things after the counsel of His own will, can tell.

That this great kingdom, equally with the kingdoms of the past, that were greatly inferior in extent of territory and population, has a place in God's plan, none who believe God's Word can doubt; and all such will from the heart comply with the exhortation to pray "For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all of godliness and honesty;" (1 Timothy 2:2) and that he who is this day anointed king over this

vast realm may fully appreciate the high responsibility placed upon him, and the wondrous opportunities for good that are open before him.

We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand an awful time;
In an age on ages telling,
To be living is sublime.
--Arthur C. Coxe, Athanasion (1840), "We Are Living, We Are Dwelling"

How much more so, then, to stand in a position where one's every word commands the attention of the whole world. Never was there a time when so truly as now the words of Christ were applicable: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them." (Matthew 13:17)

The Gospel of the Kingdom is now going to the world to an extent never before known, and soon He will come whose right it is. Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords will soon come, "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve Him and obey Him." (Daniel 7:27)

And, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." (Matthew 24:34)

Edward VII, if God spares his life as long as He did the beloved Queen Victoria's, will have questions brought before him for decision, such as have been before no other king for centuries,--questions affecting his personal relation to God, His truth, and His people.

God grant, that for his own sake, as well as that of his people, his heart may indeed be in the Lord's hand as the rivers of water, to be turned withersoever He will; and let all the people say,

"Amen! God save the King!"--Present Truth, June 26, 1902--Psalm 21:1-7.

Chapter 42

Psalm 21: The King and the Crown

It is not concerning a single individual or a specially favored few that the 21st Psalm speaks. "Whosoever will" (Mark 8:34; Revelation 22:17) may apply it to himself. And yet it may indeed be said to be limited to a single individual,--Christ, the King,--for: "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist," (Colossians 1:17,RV) and He is the "One New Man." (Ephesians 2:15)

All men together are but "one in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3:28) so that one embraces the whole. Everything that is said of "the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5) applies to all who accept Him; for, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)

God made man in the beginning male and female, "and called their name Adam;" (Genesis 5:1) "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

When God made man for the express purpose of having dominion over the works of His hands,--made him king,--He "crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5)

Every individual of mankind, male and female, was designed to have this high honor. Now we do not see men in possession of their rightful dominion, but we see Jesus who as man has it, and who as "a quickening Spirit," (1 Corinthians 15:45) has power over all flesh to give it to every man. He suffered our humiliation, that He might bring many sons back to the original glory. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to

make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:9-10)

This is our assurance of perfect victory over Satan and all his temptations. "Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Every person, however rash and impetuous, may learn patience, and possess the ability to rule his own Spirit, and thus be greater than the mighty. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32)

It is no dishonor to His Majesty King Edward VII to say that every man is by Divine right a king. On the contrary, if all men in the British Empire would avail themselves of that right, it would be the highest honor ever accorded to any human being to be acknowledged as king over them. For it must be admitted by all, that the more honorable and mighty the people are, the greater is the honor of the king.

So the truest patriotism and the highest honor that any person can show to his country is to be wholly subject to God. He who best serves God, best serves his fellow-men.

The motto, Ich Dien, "I serve," which the king had as Prince of Wales, is the one which to a far higher degree belongs to him now; for the greatest ruler is the greatest servant. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:27-28)

God, the King of kings, serves the universe, looking carefully after every detail necessary to secure the comfort and well-being of His creatures. Next week we shall, God willing, show more fully how from the throne of the king the wants of all the subjects must be supplied. (See the article "The Throne and the King" in the Appendix)

What is the crown which the Great King gives to those who by acknowledging Him become kings? and when do they receive it? We have already read, "You set a crown of pure gold on his head." (Psalm 21:3)

But we have a very faint appreciation of the dignity and greatness of our calling if we think that this is corruptible gold such as is used in commerce. Earth has no gold valuable enough to form a real crown for a king indeed. The purest gold of this earth, fashioned into the most gorgeous coronet, can at best serve only as a figure of the true crown.

Think a moment! Is it fitting that the authority of the king should be derived from something far beneath him in value? We shall find a clue to what constitutes the crown, if we read carefully a few scriptures. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things ... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1 18-19) which tells us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood, the life of Christ. It is by this life that we reign with Him. Again, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." (James 1:13)

Now read in this connection Psalm 21, concerning the King: "You prevent him with the blessing of goodness, you set a crownof pure gold on his head. He asked life of You, and You gave it to him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in your salvation, honor and majesty have You laid upon him." (Psalm 21:2-4) "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:1)

Life, the incorruptible, endless life of Christ, is the pure gold "tried in the fire," (Revelation 3:18) which we are to buy without money, and which will be our everlasting crown. This is still further indicated by the terms used concerning the crown. For instance: "His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall His crown flourish." (Psalm 132:18)

The word "flourish" is used of things that grow, like a flower, as Aaron's rod budded and bloomed blossoms. "And it came to pass, that on the morrow

Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." (Numbers 17:8) "Israel shall blossom and bud." (Isaiah 27:6)

The crown of glory that the faithful shepherd kings receive "fades not away." (1 Peter 5:4)

All this language implies a crown that grows upon and out of the king himself. His crown is the perfection of the life, the outshining of the glory within him. This crown is necessarily "a crown of righteousness," (2 Timothy 4:8) because the life of the Lord is righteousness. And so we see that we may have the strength and glory of the crown even now, and are not obliged to wait for "the crowning day" that is coming.

As King Edward has reigned for more than a year before the coronation, receiving the homage of his loyal people, and having his royal authority recognized by all the world, even so we are now uncrowned kings. "It does not yet appear what we shall be," (1 John 3:2) for the glory is not yet revealed, but the never-fading, neverending glorious life that will crown us in the world to come is our strength for overcoming in this present evil world. We are to reign now, the coronation day will simply be the blossoming out, the shining forth, the perfection, of the life by which we are "more than conquerors." (Romans 8:37)--Present Truth, June 26, 1902--Psalm 21.

Chapter 43

Psalm 21: God's Surrounding Goodness

"For You come to meet him with the blessings of goodness." (Psalm 21:3)

The reader will notice that in quoting from Psalm 21:3, we have rendered it, "You come to meet him," instead of, "You prevent him," which is archaic, and conveys no meaning to the ordinary reader. The literal meaning of "prevent" is to go before, and this is the sense in which it was formerly used; but it has now lost that meaning in our language, and means to hinder, to stop, since one who would stop another goes before him to shut off his way.

God's Word, however, has not changed, but means the same that it always did, and so should be translated by words that convey the original sense. God is before us, and He comes to meet us, bringing the blessings of His goodness. That is what we are told in the 21st Psalm; but in the familiar 23rd Psalm we read that: "goodness and mercy shall follow [literally, "run after"] us all the days of our life.

So we cannot turn round without encountering the goodness of the Lord. He comes to meet us with His goodness; and if we in our stubbornness turn round to avoid Him, lo, we meet His goodness running after us. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" (Psalm 107:8)

Who is there that does not know that some, at least, of his friends esteem him more highly than he deserves? Everyone has certainly had credit at some times and in some quarters for possessing abilities that he is conscious of lacking, or of having had a greater part in the accomplishment of some good end than he really had. Yet we do not try to correct all these mistaken ideas; we know that it would be impossible to have everybody estimate us exactly at our true value. We are content that our friends should think very well of us, even though we may not be seeking vain glory. (Galatians 5:26)

Why, then, should we complain when we receive less credit than is our due? Why, when we are under-estimated, and we are charged with mistakes or errors of which we are not guilty, or another is given praise for a good thing which we did, should we be so anxious for "justice" to be done? Why should we in this case be so desirous that everybody should know exactly how things really stand? Why not take the undeserved blame as a necessary offset to that undeserved credit? Thus the balance is preserved. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10)

So true is it that God is "not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being," (Acts 17:27-28) that it is exceeding strange that more people do not "feel after Him and find Him." (Acts 17:27)

It was a heathen poet that gave expression to the Christian truth, "We are also His offspring," (Acts 17:28) and another one of the same class recently said that: "What is cohesive power in a block of marble is intelligence in man."

This also is Gospel truth, for the cohesive power in marble is the Spirit of God; yet men who assent to it will refuse to be as passive in relation to it as is the marble, which is the only way that they can be as perfect as men as the marble is as marble.--Present Truth, November 21, 1901--Psalm 21:3.

Chapter 44

Psalm 23: The Lord is My Shepherd

The Lord is My Shepherd

Wednesday, June 1

"The Lord is my shepherd." (Psalm 23)

It is a great help to know and remember, in repeating these familiar words, that the word here rendered "Lord" is Jehovah--the Living One--the One who is--the I Am.

Jehovah is my shepherd. Place the emphasis on both "Jehovah" and "my;" the One who inhabits eternity, whose word creates, has devoted His life to caring for me.

The word "Shepherd" is rendered from a word meaning "to feed." A sheep, above all other domestic animals, requires gentle treatment; brusque, harsh usage disconcerts it. It cannot be driven, but must be led; and only the one who feeds and cares for it can lead it.

From the fact that the two greatest rulers in Israel--Moses and David--were shepherds, and that the King of the universe is the "Great Shepherd," we may know God's idea of royal authority, of fitness to rule.

In God's mind, to rule is not to domineer, but to use power in service. Our Shepherd combines infinite power and infinite tenderness. He feeds the flock with His own body, and thus demonstrates His right to rule.

Sufficient in God

Thursday, June 2

"I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack.
--Anna L. Waring, Hymn: In Heavenly Love Abiding, 1850.

How can we lack, when all things come of Him and are in Him, and He gives us himself. But everything depends on a proper understanding of what it is to be in want and not to want. The one who is content in whatever state he is, never knows want; while the discontented person is always suffering from want. The epitaph over a miser says that:

Content was never once his guest,
Though twice ten thousand filled his chest;
So this poor man, with all his store,
Fed in great want--the want of more.
--J. G. Flügel, Budget of Mirth and Sparks of Wit, 1831.

But he who knows Whom he has believed, knows that there is nothing more, so wants no more.

Safety and Abundance

Friday, June 3

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures." (Psalm 23:2)

Two things are suggested by this verse: abundance of provision, and nothing to fear. An old shepherd was once asked when his sheep lay down, and he replied: "When they have eaten and have nothing to frighten them."

Those who dwell in the house of the Lord, as this psalm indicates, "shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness [of it];" (Psalm 36:8) and though the devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking to devour the flock, the knowledge that they are inside and he outside, precludes all fear. "Thus says the Lord, in

returning and rest shall you saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

Living Fountains of Water

Sabbath, June 4

"He leads me beside the still water." (Psalm 23:2)

We read of those who serve the Lord day and night in His temple:

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. ... For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." (Revelation 7:16-17)

For, "There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." (Isaiah 33:21)

Israel's experience in the desert (Compare Exodus 17:1-7 with 1 Corinthians 10:4) shows that we may have this experience in this world as well as in that which is to come. Jehovah is our Shepherd now as surely as He will ever be; and living waters of rest are our portion now as truly as they will be then, when with the eyes of our spiritual bodies we see God's face and the crystal river flowing from His throne.

Soul Restoration

Sunday, June 5

"He restores my soul." (Psalm 23:3)

To restore is to bring back; so when we have wandered out of the way, the Lord kindly brings us back, even at the expense of His own life. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him [has taken on himself] the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

This bringing back is our restoration to life--our deliverance from sin and all its consequences. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:2-5)

The Paths of Righteousness

Monday, June 6

"He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (Psalm 23:3)

Still "He leads me." The paths of righteousness lie beside the still waters. It is not in warfare and strife that righteousness is gained.

"The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)

This does not mean that we should become hermits or go into cloisters, but that in the midst of the strife of tongues we, walking with Christ, should be kept "secretly in a pavilion." (Psalm 31:20)

Jesus was unmoved by false accusation and the clamor of the multitude for His life. His own righteousness and peace He gives us for His name's sake. He himself is glorified by His own gifts. This is our safeguard against discouragement in view of our own unworthiness.

Life in the Presence of Death

Tuesday, June 7

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

While it is certainly true that the Lord is with the trusting ones who go down into the grave, for they sleep in Him; it is no less certain that this verse especially contemplates the Lord's presence with us in the valley of the shadow of death, in order that we may pass through it alive. His presence with us means life to us "for He is your life, and the length of your days." (Deuteronomy 30:20) "[He is] alive forevermore," (Revelation 1:18) and He says, "because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19) "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined." (Isaiah 9:2)

And that light is "the light of life." (John 8:12)

Have you seen the light? "According to your faith, so be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29)

Food in the Presence of Enemies

Wednesday, June 8

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." (Psalm 23:5)

What could be more expressive of perfect security than this statement? Enemies are raging round us, yet in the face of their threatened attack we quietly sit down to the table which the Lord prepares for us. They come upon us to eat our flesh, and we in safety eat the good things of the Lord's house.

When the wicked surround the New Jerusalem, intending to capture it and to destroy its inhabitants, (Revelation 20:7-9) those who are inside will be no safer than those are now who put their trust in God. He serves them now, even as He will then. (See Luke 12:37)

What a wonder! The King of glory not only catering for His subjects, but himself waiting upon them at table! What more could He do?

The Oil of Joy

Thursday, June 9

"You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)

This oil is "the oil of gladness," (Psalm 45:7) "[the] joy in the Holy Ghost," (Romans 14:17) which constitutes the kingdom of God. Christ is anointed to give "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:3)

Those who are thus anointed are kings, reigning in life with Christ. The cheerful person is king indeed; if his cheerfulness comes from trust in God, nothing is impossible for him. He has enough and to spare; his cup overflows to others, because the Lord, in whom is all fullness, is the portion of his inheritance and of his cup. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: you maintain my lot." (Psalm 16:5)

Goodness and Mercy

Friday, June 10

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)

The Hebrew warrants the rendering given in some versions: "Only goodness and mercy shall follow me." How can it be otherwise, when "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having Thee in all,
Of having all in Thee.
--Henry Francis Lyte, Hymn: My Spirit on Thy Care, 1834.

And this goodness and mercy that follow us are God's own self. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," (Exodus 34:6)

Wherever we go, His goodness and mercy pursue us--run after us. "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10)

In the House of the Lord

Sabbath, June 11

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (Psalm 23:6)

In whatever desert place we are, and however stony our bed, the Lord is in that place, whether we know it or not, and therefore it is His house. His presence makes "the dry land springs of water," (Isaiah 41:18) and so even in the barren land we walk beside the still waters, and lie down in green pastures. For "you are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God." (Hebrews 12:22)

It is a good place to dwell; for "those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age they shall be fat and flourishing." (Psalm 92:13-14)--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, June 1904--Psalm 23:1-6.

Chapter 45

Psalm 23: The Overflowing Cup

"My cup runs over." (Psalm 23:5)

So sang the psalmist. With what was his cup filled so lavishly? He tells us: "The Lord is the portion ... of my cup." (Psalm 16:5)

He had an overflowing measure of the Lord. What is the nature of this drink? It is life, eternal life. "[He is] the Fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

And we can say the same that the psalmist did; for, "Of His fullness have all we received." (John 1:16)

He has come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10) Out of our overflowing cup of life we are to drink until we are also full to overflowing, and from us must flow forth rivers of living water for the refreshment of others. (John 7:38)--Present Truth, November 6, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 23:5.

Chapter 46

Psalm 23: Pursued by Mercy

In that most familiar of Psalms, the 23rd, we read, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)

The Hebrew word rendered "follow," properly means, "to run after, to follow eagerly, to pursue." We associate the word "follow" with the idea of lagging along behind; but the inspired song is that goodness and mercy shall pursue us, they will run after us.

His goodness and power are in His word, and: "His word runs very swiftly." (Psalm 147:15)

We are prone to think only of the fact that Satan goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking to destroy us, forgetting that God sends His goodness and mercy also after us, and that they are able to deliver us. "The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me." (Psalm 42:8)--Present Truth, January 18, 1894--Psalm 23:6.

Chapter 47

Psalm 23: Seeking and Being Sought

The mistaken notion obtains among most people, that happiness and success must be sought for. The truth is, that they are the free gift of God, and cannot be obtained in any other way than from the hand of God. Whoever seeks for them will invariably miss them. On the other hand, they are seeking us. The psalmist said, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)

The Hebrew word here rendered, "follow" is, literally, pursue, run after. Goodness and mercy are, at the command of God, pursuing His people. In line with this are the words of Moses when he rehearsed the law of God to Israel: "If you shall diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all of His commandments, ... All these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you." (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

If we seek for happiness we shall never find it, because that is selfishness; and selfishness is opposed to the commandment of God. But happiness is hunting for us, and will quickly overtake us if we do not run away from it, for: "His word runs very swiftly." (Psalm 147:15)--Present Truth, December 4, 1902--Psalm 23:6.

Chapter 48

Psalm 23: The House of the Lord

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23:6)

In whatever desert place we are, and however stony our bed, the Lord is in that place, whether we know it or not, and therefore it is His house. His presence makes "the dry land springs of water," (Isaiah 41:18) and so even in the barren land we walk beside the still waters, and lie down in green pastures. For, "You are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God." (Hebrews 12:22)

It is a good place to dwell in, for "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish inthe courts of our God. They shall still bring forth in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." (Psalm 92:13-14)--Present Truth, September 29, 1904--Psalm 23:6.

Chapter 49

Psalm 24: The Lord's People

Who are the Lord's people, and where may they be found? The answer is easy--every one and everywhere. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1)

If you are a dweller in this world you belong to the Lord. It is not a question of whether you have ever given yourself to Him or not; for all men are His by purchase. He bought us when we had not power to give ourselves, and ransomed us with His life. Now the question is, "Will you let Him do what He will with His own?"

All belong to the Lord; but not all will let Him have His own. That is all the difference there is between men. The Lord paid no more for one than He did for another. He has no favorites.

But while the favor is equally extended to all, few in every generation have been willing to own the fact that the earth is the Lord's and that all who are in it belong to Him. The acknowledgment must be a personal one, and this text must for ever put away that miserable wail of the hymn:

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?
--John Newton, Hymn: In Doubt and Fear.

"Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his you are to whom you obey?" (Romans 6:6)

He who feels a doubt if he is the Lord's may set his mind at rest on that point; he is the Lord's but has not acknowledged God's claim on him.

And he who does not know that he loves the Lord, may be very sure that he does not, because he does not know Him. Whoever knows the Lord, loves Him. "He that loves not knows not God; for God is love." (1 John 4:8)--Present Truth, December 5, 1895--Psalm 24:1.

Chapter 50

Psalm 25: The Lord's Forgetfulness

There is not a sin that any soul has committed, that is not known to God. Yet the Psalmist uttered the following inspired prayer: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to your mercy remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord." (Psalm 25:7)

It is the Spirit that teaches us how to pray, because He knows the human heart, and also the mind of God, and "He makes intercession for us according to the will of God." (Romans 8:27)

Therefore we may know that it is the will of God to forget our sins, and we may ask it in full assurance. God says of those who hearken to His voice, and yield to His Spirit: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12)

What a blessed assurance! The great God, who knows all our sins as even we ourselves cannot know them, receives us gladly, and treats us as though we had never sinned, because He forgets our sins, and sees in us only His own righteousness. Thus we can associate with Him without any fear or restraint.

He does not despise us, nor abash us with reproachful pity. He does not shrink from us, as so fearful that we may defile Him, but receives us into His bosom. Happy are they who know the Lord indeed; and happy are the repentant sinners who see only Christ in His professed followers.--Present Truth, March 22, 1894--Psalm 25:7.

Chapter 51

Psalm 25: The Fountain of Eternal Youth

Who is there that is not suffering in his body for some sin against the laws of life and health, that is, against God's life, committed no doubt in the ignorance of youth? or from some inherited weakness that has been magnified by continued yielding to it? The sin was committed in ignorance, but we suffer nevertheless, even after we have learned the right way.

Is there then no hope for us, that we may be freed from the infirmity? or must we suffer for our past ignorance as long as we live? There need to be no uncertainty about this matter, for the Scriptures speak plainly. Let us read one blessed promise: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to your mercy remember me for your goodness sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners inthe way." (Psalm 25:7-8)

This is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit, who is sent to help our infirmities, and to teach us to pray as we ought; and, "He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:27)

Therefore we know this prayer is one that God is pleased to answer, and that He will forget the sins of our youth, because He will destroy them--swallow them up in His life.

Our sins were committed in ignorance, and the Lord who has compassion on the ignorant, and "on them that are out of the way," (Hebrews 5:2) gives us His own wisdom. He does this, teaching us the right way, because He is "good and upright;" (Psalm 25:8) but in that God is good and upright, or "faithful and just, [He] forgives our sins, and cleanses us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

It is "by His knowledge" that the righteous Servant of God makes many righteous, "for He shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11) "All things that

pertain unto life and godliness [are given to us] through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:3)

But in giving us wisdom [and He gives it freely to all who lack it, and ask for it (James 1:5)], God does not merely give us the knowledge which enables us to recognize our failure, and leaves us to mourn over it; the Gospel does not leave us to hopeless regrets, but: "begets us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," (1 Peter 1:3) making us "partakers of the Divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4)

Being born again, born from above, (Galatians 4:26) we have the privilege of beginning life anew. Is it not a glorious prospect? How often we have said, "If I could live my life over again..."

But if we could, we should without doubt do the same things again, that we have done. God provides something far better than that, in giving to us an entirely new life, so that we may begin again under entirely new and better conditions.

In forgiving all our iniquities, God provides healing for all our diseases. Read the exhortation to bless Him "who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:4-5)

In renewing our youth, God redeems our life from destruction; and the provision for this wondrous redemption is placed within our reach, in all the good gifts of God, and is even placed within us, since the Word is near us, in our mouth and in our heart, (Romans 10:8) and God's everlasting power and Divinity are manifested in every thing that He has made. (Romans 1:20)

In Christ we find the fountain of eternal youth. Therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O, my soul; and forget not all His benefits." (Psalm 103:1-2)--Present Truth, September 13, 1900--Psalm 25:7-8.

Chapter 52

Psalm 25: Meekness

"The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." (Psalm 25:9)

But there is nobody who is naturally meek. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evileye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." (Mark 7:21-22) "Pride compasses them about as a chain." (Psalm 73:6)

Meekness can be learned only from Christ. He says, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. To be meek is to be like Christ." (Matthew 11:28-29) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Meekness then is identical with perfect obedience to the law of God through the Spirit. It is the same thing as love, which "vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

And, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10) "[In Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) "[He is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

The Spirit of the Lord is "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:2)

Therefore he who learns of Christ, the meek and lowly One, and possesses the Spirit, whose fruit is meekness, must necessarily have sound wisdom and knowledge and discretion. We read: "Let nothing be done

through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3)

This is an exhortation to meekness, but how shall the thing be done? It is not an easy thing for a man to think others better than himself. The answer is indicated in Romans 12:3, where the exhortation is repeated: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12:3) "faith ... is the gift of God," (Ephesians 2:8) "and the measure of faith which He has dealt to every man is" (Romans 12:3) "the faith of Jesus," (Revelation 14:12) which of course carries with it His meekness. It is not possible that any man should, of himself, think others better than himself. But when God reveals himself to him, and he realizes his own sinfulness by contrast, it is impossible for him to imagine that any other can be as bad as he is. Thus he can, with Paul, declare himself to be the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15)

There are very many who have this experience at times; to be continually in that condition is another matter. How can it be maintained? Only by "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher [Perfecter] of faith." (Hebrews 12:2)

His faith, His trust in the Father, by which self was kept out of sight, that the works might be seen to be only the Father's, will work the same in us. Then may be fulfilled in weak men and women the words of Christ, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12)

The power that can do those works through human agents, can also preserve in them the meekness that will not become puffed up by them. Thus meekness brings wisdom and power.--Present Truth, September 6, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 25:9.

Chapter 53

Psalm 25: Forgiveness and God's Name

"For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." (Psalm 25:11)

What a strange ground on which to base a plea for pardon! One is naturally inclined to minimize his fault, when asking for pardon; among men the smaller the offense the more easily the pardon is secured, and that is why people are so apt to try to hide their sins, or make them appear as small as possible. That plan, however, is not the right one to pursue with the Lord. "Pardon my iniquity; for it is great." (Psalm 25:11)

When we think of it, we can see that the greater the sin the greater the need of pardon; and when we look at the matter from the Lord's point of view, we can understand how it is that the surest way to obtain pardon from Him is to set forth the sin in all its enormity, without minimizing or excusing it in any way whatever. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Righteousness belongs to the Lord, (Daniel 9:7) and: "He abides faithful; He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

The greater our sin, therefore, the greater the manifestation of God's righteousness in forgiving it. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief; Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief Jesus Christ might show forth all His longsuffering, for an ensample of them which should hereafter believe on Him unto eternal life." (1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Just because Paul was the chief of sinners he received mercy! (1 Timothy 1:15-16) "What a wonderful Saviour!"--E. A. Hoffman, Hymn: What a Wonderful Saviour, 1891.

Let no one fear to come to the Lord for pardon, because he is so great a sinner; his sinfulness is his recommendation to the Lord. "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. ... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matthew 9:12-13)

The name of the Lord is: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)

Now the plea is, "For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity." (Psalm 25:11)

If He should refuse such a request, He would be denying His own name. He would be saying that He is no longer the Lord God. You see it is absolutely impossible for the Lord to refuse to pardon any sinner. As long as God lives, He must pardon the sins of every one who from the heart requests forgiveness and cleansing. "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:6-10)

Belief in Christ is incompatible with doubt as to His power or willingness to forgive any sin. To doubt on these points, is to disbelieve that He is the Christ, the Son of God. "Him has God exalted with His own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31)

Mark, He gives repentance and forgiveness to Israel, without exception, and it was they who crucified Him. To the very ones who cried, "Crucify Him!" forgiveness was preached. Who then dare say that he has sinned so much that he cannot be forgiven?

We are reconciled to God by the death of Christ. "He died for all." (2 Corinthians 5:15) "By the grace of God, He tasted death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

Then are all reconciled. There is not a soul on earth whom God does not in Christ count as sinless, for: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Whoever in the world, therefore, sincerely acknowledges himself to be a trespasser, may know that he is that very moment freely and fully forgiven. And since it is by the life of Christ that we are saved, (Romans 5:10) it is evidently just as easy for Him to save one person as another. To disbelieve this is to limit the Lord, and to make Him like one of us.

The same One who created the tiniest blade of grass also created the entire universe, and by the very same power. Nothing less than the life of Christ could create the smallest thing, and nothing more is required for the greatest. So to create a clean heart in the vilest sinner is for the infinite life of the Lord just as easy as to do so for the little child.

With what confidence then may we trust in the Lord for all that we need!

This life of trust, how glad, how sweet!
My need and thy great fullness meet,
And I have all in Thee.
--Jean Sophia Pigott, Hymn: Lord Jesus, Thou dost Keep Thy Child.

--Present Truth, December 1, 1898--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 25:11.

Chapter 54

Psalm 25: The Mercy of the Lord

"For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." (Psalm 25:11)

How different that is from the way persons uninstructed by the Holy Spirit would come to the Lord. Ordinarily, when we are asking for mercy we minimize the offense as much as possible; plead great provocation and extenuating circumstances, and thus cover up for the moment the extent of the sin until it is passed over and forgiven. But in this prayer David makes no excuses: "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." (Psalm 25:11)

No matter how much we know about the Lord, we need continually to be reminded of the basis of pardon, or we shall get discouraged, give up, and fall out of the way. The only thing that keeps us in the way, is the one thing that starts us in the way. We can never get discouraged so long as we are holding on to that which started us, and the more we get of that the stronger we are.

When we sin, the only way of escape is to be lifted out by the Lord, and have the sin forgiven and taken away. Jesus can do that, and the way He does it is by putting righteousness in the place of sin--Christ putting himself there, taking the sin on himself, and swallowing it up. Although He had the sin of the world upon Him, no one ever saw anything but righteousness.

It is as though all the refuse matter and corruption were cast into a pit, yet the pit swallows up everything, hides it away, disinfects it, so that no miasma, foul odors, or disease come from it. So with Christ. All the disease and sin and filth of the world were put upon Him, yet nobody ever saw it there. There is the marvel, for with men, "the works of the flesh are manifest." (Galatians 5:19)

They are visible in the very flesh of men, women, and children as you pass them on the street, even though not a word be uttered. Christ puts

himself in our lives, and that takes the sin away. It is buried. And the magnitude of the sin makes no difference. He can pardon a great offense as well as a small one. To limit the Lord when He says He pardons, is to say that He will pardon up to a certain point, and then will go no further. This would make Him a finite being. That was the sin of ancient Israel: "They ... limited the Holy One of Israel." (Psalm 78:41)

Look at it in another way. The true physician is the one who can give relief in the most critical cases. It is the cases of extremity that need help; but if the help fails when it is most needed, what is it good for? "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

The Lord never fails. So we can come to Him with this thought right before us: "Lord, my sin is great,--greater than I can measure,--therefore, I want pardon."

And because it is great is the reason why the Lord pardons. It is our great need that commends us most to Him.

Again: If we were to follow an army as nurse, to help the wounded--extend our aid to all alike, friend or foe, after a battle,--it would be the most urgent cases that we would help first. Those who were but slightly wounded we would leave till the last. Or, if a house were on fire, or a flood coming, those who were in the greatest danger would appeal first to us for the help we could give.

It is just this that most recommends us to the Lord. In Isaiah, the 1st chapter, the Lord speaks of His people: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity ... the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." (Isaiah 1:4-6)

This is no figure of speech, for at the very last, when men have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and there is no hope for them, the very next thing is that a "noisome and grievous sore" (Revelation 16:2) break out upon them. It is even so now, for sin will break out upon men who have rejected

God. And even though the body may appear fair to look upon, yet when sin is there inside, to the Lord that body has within it a loathsome ulcer, and that is the condition, in God's sight, of all mankind whom the blood of Christ has not cleansed.

In the 30th chapter of Isaiah we find another characteristic of this rebellious people brought out. In the first verse we read: "You take counsel, but not of me; you cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit." (Isaiah 30:1)

And in the ninth verse and onward: "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord. Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to come from before us." (Isaiah 30:9-11)

Yet in the face of all that--to this people, unsound from head to foot, lying children, rejecting the Lord altogether, to them it is said: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you." (Isaiah 30:18)

What loving-kindness, what tender mercy!--Present Truth, August 31, 1899--Psalm 25:11.

Chapter 55

Psalm 25: A Good Lodging Place

Speaking of the man "that fears the Lord" the Psalmist says,

"His soul shall dwell at ease." (Psalm 25:13)

The marginal reading gives the literal Hebrew rendering, "His soul shall lodge in goodness." (Psalm 25:13)

And when the God-fearing soul is lodging in goodness, the fear of man and all evil is shut out.--Present Truth, July 25, 1895--Psalm 25:13.

Chapter 56

Psalm 25: Secrets

One of the most wonderful verses in the Bible is this: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

Men have been known to give what to the majority of people would be a fortune, merely to gain possession of some State secret; but the secret of the King of kings, who inhabits eternity, sitting in the high and holy place, may freely become the property of the poorest person on earth.

May we know what this secret is? Certainly, yet not so that one person can reveal it to another. Surely every one with whom the secret is will know it; yet no matter how many know it, it still remains a secret. Only God himself can impart it to any soul. It cannot be bought or sold, and nobody can make private gain of it; yet it is of inestimable value both for time and for eternity.

Well, what is this wonderful secret? It is that which distinguishes the Lord from all false gods. The prophet Jeremiah enables us to find it out. After describing the helpless idols, which "must needs be borne, because they cannot go," (Jeremiah 10:5) and which "cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good," (Jeremiah 10:5) he adds: "But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: ... He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His direction." (Jeremiah 10:10,12)

The secret of the Lord is life. "He is your life, and the length of your days." (Deuteronomy 30:20) "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:25)

That life is the secret of the Lord, is evident from the words of the text: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

What is His covenant? Speaking of Levi, that is, the one joined to Him, the Lord says, "My covenant was with him of life and peace." (Malachi 2:5)

The one who is joined to the Lord gets life; for nothing can be in His presence without partaking of His overflowing life. Coming to the Living Stone, we also become living stones. (1 Peter 2:4-5) "He asked life of You, and You gave it him, even length of days for ever and ever." (Psalm 21:4)

The Lord's blessing, which He has commanded, is "life for evermore," (Psalm 133:3) for: "His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

Secrets are revealed only to intimate friends; to know another's secrets means very close acquaintance, and very confidential relations. So it is that the word rendered "secret" in Psalm 25:14, has also the meaning of "familiar acquaintance," "confidential intercourse," and is so translated in some versions. This also shows that life is the secret of the Lord; for to know the only true God is life eternal. (John 17:3) Life, eternal life, "life for evermore," (Psalm 133:3) is the secret of the Lord, and it is "with them that fear Him." (Psalm 25:14)

Mark well this last statement. The text does not say that we shall know the secret, but that we shall have it with us. God shows it to us; "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it." (1 John 1:2)

Those who fear the Lord have the secret of life, the secret of living; they know how to live, because the Lord shows them how He lives, and comes and lives His own life in them, as they "Fight the good fight of faith, [and] lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:12)

It is impossible for anybody basely to betray the Lord's secret, for nobody can be in possession of it except in the immediate presence of the Lord. If one would go away from the Lord, to trade with His secret on his own account, he would lose it the instant he separated from God. The one who would remain in possession of the secret must dwell in "the secret place of the Most High [and] abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

"God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

The secret, therefore, is love, for love is life, and God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit of life. The secret, or mystery, of God, is: "Christ in you the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

And the acceptance of the Gospel makes us sharers of "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God." (Ephesians 3:9)

When God dwells in us, then of course the mystery must be hid in us. The Lord expects us to confide in Him, telling Him the secrets of our own lives. "Whoso covers his sins shall not prosper." (Proverbs 28:13)

We must part with them to the Lord. "He abides faithful," (2 Timothy 2:13) and will not betray us. Our only safety is in telling them to Him, for in the day when "every work [shall be brought] into judgment, with every secret thing," (Ecclesiastes 12:14) all will be spread out to the gaze of the universe. Our secret sins will be safe from observation, because God will have buried them in the depths of the sea, so that though they be sought for they cannot be found. (Micah 7:19; Jeremiah 50:20) And God himself will have forgotten them, so that He cannot make them known if He would.

It is as blessed to be able to tell the Lord our secrets as it is to know His secret. He who has the secret of the Lord,--life,--has all that he needs for this world and the one to come. Therefore get acquainted with God, study His works, and learn His ways.--Present Truth, December 27, 1900--Psalm 25:14.

Chapter 57

Psalm 27: The Lord is My Strength

The Lord is My Strength

Monday, June 13

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

The song for God's people in the time of trouble is: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

The only remedy against fear is the knowledge that God is our strength and our salvation. Whoever trusts to the strength which he imagines that he has in and of himself, is sure sooner or later to fail through fear. But he who knows and acknowledges God as his sole strength cannot fail nor be frightened, because he knows that God cannot fail. The Rock of Ages stands firm.

But this means the constant recognition of the fact that we have no strength of brain or muscle apart from God; that it is in Him that we live and move. How gladly we should make this acknowledgment, since it means so much for us.

The Lord is My Defense

Tuesday, June 14

"When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell." (Psalm 27:2)

In John 18:3-6 we read how it was with those who came out against Christ. "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from thechief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him,went forth, and said unto them, Whom do you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." (John 18:3-6)

The power that was in Him made them fall to the ground. Afterward He went with them voluntarily; but the incident shows us how impossible it is even for armed foes to do anything against those whose strength is wholly the Lord's, and who trust in Him alone.

We have nothing to do with defending ourselves against either weapons or words that devour, when we take God for our defense.

Fearless in the Face of War

Wednesday, June 15

"Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." (Psalm 27:3)

In what shall we be confident when war arises against us? Simply in this, that the Lord is our light and our salvation and the strength of our life. (Psalm 27:1)

In 2 Kings chapter 6 we have the account of an army that came out against a single unarmed man. He had no fear, because he knew that the invisible army for Him was far greater than the visible army against Him.

Neither swords nor cannon balls can pierce or break down the defense which God's word forms round the child of God.

The storm may rage around me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

--Anna Letitia Waring, Hymn: In Heavenly Love Abiding, 1850.

Behold the Beauty of the Lord

Thursday, June 16

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4) "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." (Jeremiah 45:5)

That is, success in life does not consist in doing, but in being. It is not well to be so intent on doing some great work that we have no time to behold and appreciate the beauty of the Lord. It is "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves," (Titus 3:5,RV)--but by looking--looking unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2)--that we are saved. Time spent in beholding the beauty of the Lord is not wasted; for it is only when the beauty of the Lord is upon us that the work of our hands is established. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish it." (Psalm 90:17)

Safe in His Pavilion

Friday, June 17

"In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of the tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." (Psalm 27:5)

This is why the one thing to be desired is to dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Psalm 27:4) Only in the Lord's house can we behold His beauty and when we dwell in His house we are sure to be safe in the time of trouble, for we shall be out of the enemy's reach.

When we are in the secret of the Lord's tabernacle, we are hidden. We can see the enemy, but the enemy cannot see us. Read the 91st Psalm, to learn of

the security of the Lord's secret place: "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God;in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover you with his feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrowthat flies by day; Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. 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 thewicked. Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. For 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. You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet. Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:1-16)

Songs for Victory to Come

Sabbath, June 18

"And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psalm 27:6)

It is with "songs of deliverance" that the Lord compasses us about. "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7)

That is to say, our safety is in singing the praises of God,--not in merely singing songs that somebody else has written, and which may mean nothing

to us, but in singing and making melody in the heart, sometimes even without words, but always with the spirit and with the understanding.

It is not enough to praise the Lord for what He has done for us; true faith gives Him thanks for deliverance yet to come, with the enemies all round us. It was when Israel sang and gave thanks to God for His ever enduring mercy that God set ambushments against their enemies: "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There comes a great multitude against you from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, And said, O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand You? Are You not our God, who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham your friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built You a sanctuary therein for your name, saying, If, when evil comes upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in your presence, (for your name is in this house,) and cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon You. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, theirwives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken, all Judah, and you inhabitants of

Jerusalem, and you king Jehoshaphat, Thus says the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them: behold, they come up by thecliff of Ziz; and you shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of

the Lord. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about." (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)

An Inspired Prayer

Sunday, June 19

"Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me and deliver me." (Psalm 27:7)

Do not read this as though it meant that you are obliged to beg and entreat the Lord to listen to you, and that you must by your importunity break down His reluctance to hear and deliver. He is always more anxious to save every man than any man is to be saved.

But this is a petition inspired by the Holy Spirit, who helps our infirmities by teaching us what to ask for. This prayer, therefore, is the Spirit's assurance that the Lord will hear and deliver us.

Seeking His Face

Monday, June 20

"When You said; Seek my face, my heart said, Your face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27:8)

Yes, we may make that response, but where shall we look for Him, that we may see His face? Have no anxiety on that score; the Lord is looking for you; and all you have to do to see Him is to look up. He says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things." (Isaiah 40:26)

God has placed men where they are, "that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27)

There is danger that we may not feel after Him; but if we do reach out our hand, we are sure straightway to find His.

Desiring God's Presence

Tuesday, June 21

"Hide not your face far from me; put not your servant away in anger: You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (Psalm 27:9)

Here we have another inspired direction what to pray for with positive assurance that our petition will be granted, because we ask according to God's will. He himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Therefore when we ask Him not to leave us, we are not trying to induce Him to stay with us, but, if we pray with the spirit and the understanding, we are expressing our willingness and desire to have His presence. He has helped us, and that is sufficient proof that He will still help us.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, June 1904--Psalm 27:1-9.

Chapter 58

Psalm 27: The Lord Is My Strength

"The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

The song for God's people in the time of trouble is: "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)

The only remedy against fear is the knowledge that God is our strength and our salvation. Whoever trusts to the strength which he imagines that he has in and of himself, is sure sooner or later to fail through fear; but he who knows and acknowledges God as his sole strength cannot fail nor be frightened, because he knows that God cannot fail.

The Rock of Ages stands firm.

But this means the constant recognition of the fact that we have no strength of brain or muscle apart from God; that it is in Him that we live and move. (Acts 17:28) How gladly we should make this acknowledgment, since it means so much for us.--Present Truth, July 7, 1904--Psalm 27:1.

Chapter 59

Psalm 27: Sure Defense and Victorious Attack

In all ages, and among all people, the temple, no matter to whom it was dedicated, has been considered a place of safety.

If a city were besieged, and hard pressed, the inhabitants as a last resort would take refuge in the sanctuary; and the men who defended the city would make their last stand there, since it was the most strongly fortified. Even a criminal fleeing from justice, was usually safe from the executioner, while in the sanctuary.

The Christian has the privilege of always dwelling in the sanctuary, even the sanctuary of the Most High God. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me." (Psalm 27:4-6) "Be my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress." (Psalm 71:3)

But perhaps this seems figurative and unreal to many. They do not see the temple of refuge. The Scripture, however, provides for that difficulty, for it says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) "What? know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 4:19)

Wherever we are, therefore, as long as we live, we may know that we abide in God's temple. If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, this will be very real to us. "When He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared me." (Hebrews 10:5)

His body we know was sacred, and it was the temple of the Lord. But the Son of God did not come into this world solely for the purpose of appearing in the body that was born of Mary. That was but the revelation of a great purpose. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," (John 1:12-13) just as Jesus of Nazareth was. He makes of all believers "one new man" in himself. (Ephesians 2:15)

We have just read that our bodies are not our own; whose, then, are they? They are the bodies of the Lord Jesus. Each one of our bodies is the body which God has prepared for His Son coming into the world; each one is just as precious in the eyes of God as His was, and is to be guarded as sacredly.

What then? Why, it is as clear as noon day that we are always as safe from the assaults of the enemy--of all enemies--as Jesus of Nazareth was; just as safe as He is now. The Lord in His holy temple will defend it against all invading foes. He even defies them saying: "The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded;therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is my adversary? let him come near to me." (Isaiah 50:7-8) "Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it comes, For the Lord God shall be your confidence, and shall keep yourfoot from being taken." (Proverbs 3:25-26) "He will not suffer your foot to be moved: he that keeps you will not slumber." (Psalm 121:3)

But this is not all. We are not to consider ourselves as continually on the defensive, shut in by a raging foe on the outside. The promise concerning each believer is that he "shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Genesis 22:17)

We can always abide in the living, moving temple of the Lord, that impregnable fortress, and still make attacks on the enemy. It is not enough for the Christian merely to repel the enemy's assaults; he must destroy all his foes. This is his privilege. "By You I have run through a troop; and by my

God have by leaped over a wall. ... I have pursued my enemies, and overtaken them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise; they are fallen under my feet. For You have girded me with strength unto the battle; You have subdued under me those that rose up against You. You have also given me the necks of my enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me." (Psalm 18:29,37-40)

Christ's army goes forth "conquering and to conquer." (Revelation 6:2)

Through Him they are "more than conquerors." (Romans 8:37) "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26)

Even this foe is not merely to be resisted, but to be pursued to his overthrow. That means that as time goes on, we are to receive new accessions of the more abundant life, and to be lifted up higher above the power of death; that death is to be compelled, by the inherent force of life, to loosen its hold upon us, until it at last drops off for ever. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and the righteousness is of me, says the Lord." (Isaiah 54:17) "Cry out, and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you." (Isaiah 12:6)--Present Truth, October 16, 1902--Psalm 27:4-6.

Chapter 60

Psalm 27: Seek My Face

"When You said, Seek my face, my heart said, Your face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27:8)

Yes, we may make that response, but where shall we look for Him, that we may see His face? Have no anxiety on that score; the Lord is looking for you; and all you have to do to see Him is to look up. He says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things." (Isaiah 40:26)

God has placed men where they are "that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27)

There is danger that we may not feel after Him; but if we do reach out our hand, we are sure straightway to find Him.--Present Truth, August 18, 1904--Psalm 27:8.

Chapter 61

Psalm 27: Our Teacher

"Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies." (Psalm 27:11) "Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." (Psalm 25:4)

This is a prayer that all need to utter continually, because: "It is not in man that walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

And God's way, which is infinitely higher than man's way, or his comprehension, is the only right way. We are so ignorant, and so dull of comprehension, that we have need to pray with emphasis, "Make your way straight before my face." (Psalm 5:8)

Well for us is it that we have a Teacher who is very considerate, "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." (Hebrews 5:2)

Even though we have neglected, or even despised, previous instruction, He is still patient to give wisdom, "and upbraids not." (James 1:5)

Here are some good promises for our encouragement: "What man is he that fears the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. ... The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:12,14) "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know the teaching." (John 7:17) "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." (Psalm 25:9)

Moses was the meekest man, and "He made known His ways unto Moses." (Psalm 103:7)

Who can estimate the favor of being taught the way of the Lord, and being allowed to share His secret? But there is one indispensable requisite to

gaining this knowledge, and that is meekness: "Be clothed with humility; for God resists the proud, and gives grace unto the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

Who has this clothing? Nobody, for meekness and humility are foreign to human nature. All men are by nature "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17)

But God provides white raiment, and He himself will take away the filthy rags, and clothe us with "change of raiment. That is, the Lord teaches His people, and himself provides the clothing necessary for attending the school." (Zechariah 3:4)--Present Truth, April 12, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 27:11.

Chapter 62

Psalm 27: God's Way

"Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path." (Psalm 27:11) "Blessed is the man ... [Whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night [that he may know the way of God]. ... For the Lord knows the way of the righteous." (Psalm 1:1-2,6)

The "Lord knows the way" of such a one; that is, the Lord knows the way of those who know His way. When one, through constant meditation therein, knows the way of God, and has learned the secret of the Lord, his own way is assured; God knows exactly what course he will take, and can trust him in any circumstances.

Abraham knew God's way, and therefore God could say of him, "I know him, that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." (Genesis 18:19)

God knew Abraham's way, because Abraham knew His way. Our way is regulated entirely by our knowledge of God's way. It was because "[God] made known His ways unto Moses," (Psalm 103:7) that He could say of him, "I know you." (Exodus 33:17)--Present Truth, January 15, 1903--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 27:11.

Chapter 63

Psalm 29: The Joyful Sound (1898)

God's Voice in Thunder

"The voice of the Lord is upon the earth: the God of glory thunders: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." (Psalm 29:3-4) "When He utters His voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures." (Jeremiah 10:13) "Hear attentively the noise of His voice, and the sound that goes out of His mouth. He directs it under the whole heaven, and His lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His excellency; He will not stay them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice; great things does He which we cannot comprehend. For He says to the snow, Be on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of His strength." (Job 37:2-6)

What a grand thing it would be if every child were taught this truth--this fact of science! If they were taught whenever it thunders to recognize it as the voice of the Lord, "the Lord God merciful all gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7) who speaks peace to His people, (Psalm 85:8) they would never cower in terror at the sound of it. There are many men and women who cannot hear the crashing thunder without fear, because they have not learned that it is the voice of God; and there are doubtless many more who would be still more terrified at its sound if they did know that it is God's own voice, because they do not know the Lord, and have not learned that He is love.

One day when Jesus was talking to a crowd of people He broke out into the prayer, "Father, glorify your name. Then there came a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:28)

Jesus understood these words perfectly, because He was thoroughly well acquainted with the voice and words of God; but the people who stood by said that it thundered. There were indeed some who said that an angel spoke to Him, but even they could not distinguish any articulate sounds. To the most it was only ordinary thunder, and that is really what it was; for ordinary thunder is the voice of God speaking words which our dull ears and minds have not learned to comprehend. "How small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14,RV)

God does not wish that we should be afraid of His voice. The "everlasting Gospel" of salvation is to be proclaimed "with a loud voice," (Revelation 14:6-7) and that speaks only comfort. Men are simply to take up the call of the Spirit and the bride, and say, "Come;" (Revelation 22:17) and the loud cry which they are to utter can be nothing but the resounding of the mighty voice with which God first speaks it, for He says, "I have put my words in your mouth." (Isaiah 51:16; see also 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

The Throne in Heaven We are exhorted to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

By the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holy place where God himself dwells. (Hebrews 10:16; Isaiah 57:15) We may come there as boldly as a little child to its mother, and we shall hear gracious words of life spoken to us, if we can but learn to recognize the loving voice of God in the thunder. For, "The God of glory thunders," (Psalm 29:3) and the throne of grace is the throne of glory (Jeremiah 14:21) where God gives grace, "according to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:16)

John, who was permitted to see into the holy place of God, says, "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Revelation 4:5) "In the midst of the throne [whence the thunders proceeded,] stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Revelation 5:6)

So we see that the thunders come from the very place where the crucified and ascended Saviour sends forth the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

On the Cross

When Jesus hung on the cross, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." (Matthew 27:51)

There was God's throne. The body of Jesus was the temple of God, and His heart was God's throne. When He was slain, there came forth from that throne blood and water,--which is the Holy Spirit, "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." (1 John 5:7)

Calvary was the throne of the living God made visible to men; for the throne of God, as the cross of Calvary, contains the slain Lamb; and from that throne, as from Christ on the cross, comes the pure water of life--the Holy Spirit. Yet there are lightnings and thundering and voices from that throne of grace and mercy. What is that but an indication of the fact that God proclaims His grace in tones of thunder, so that none may fail to hear it, and all may know the greatness of His salvation? "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people." (Psalm 85:8)

But all have not been as willing to hear as was the psalmist. The Lord says to His people, "O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isaiah 48:16)

Speaking the Law

So we learn that God speaks peace when He speaks His law, and that those who will hearken will find peace. That peace comes from Christ, by the power of His cross; for in the heart of Christ was the law of God, (Psalm 40:8) and it flows out to us in His life. Even so, the law is in the throne of

God in heaven; for, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of your throne." (Psalm 89:14)

The ark of God, in the most holy place of the tabernacle built by Moses, was a type of the throne of God, because upon it, from between the cherubim, God appeared in glory, and spoke mercy to His people. But within the ark, underneath the mercy seat, were the tables of the law, showing that righteousness, even the righteousness of the law, is the foundation of the throne.

The law was there on dead stone, it is true, because that was only a picture, and not the reality; but it indicated the fact that in the real throne in heaven is the Lamb slain, the Living Stone,--in whose heart is the living law. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary." (Psalm 68:17,RV)

Mount Sinai was the sanctuary, the throne, of God, when "He descended upon it in fire," (Exodus 19:18) and proclaimed His law. "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice." (Exodus 19:19) "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpets, and the mountain smoking." (Exodus 20:16)

Now when we remember that from this same mountain there was at that very hour living water flowing forth, flowing directly from Christ, the smitten Rock, we see that we have in Sinai the perfect picture of the throne of God in heaven. But that throne is "the throne of grace;" (Hebrews 4:16) yes, and so was Sinai, because "The law entered that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

So Sinai, Calvary, and Mount Zion all agree in one; all are the throne of God's glorious grace, where God speaks righteousness and peace.

The People Were Afraid

When the people heard the voice of God as thunder, speaking His law, they said to Moses, "Speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us,lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Exodus 20:19-21)

What was the matter with the people? Ah,

• They didn't know the joyful sound.

• They didn't know that all the commandments of God are promises.

• They did not know that great as are the requirements of God's law, so great is His grace to put the righteousness of the law into and upon us. (Romans 3:22)

• They did not know that God's mercy is as great as His judgments, and that though truth--the law of God, (Psalm 119:142)--goes before His face, mercy accompanies it. (Psalm 89:14)

He had sworn to Abraham, that He would make him and his seed righteous, and this proclamation of the law was but the exhibition of the greatness of His sure promise. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day, and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:15-16)

Let us learn the joyful sound. Let us know that the thunders that come from Sinai, that are heard on Calvary, and that proceed from the throne of God in heaven, are but the assurances of His grace and mercy, and of the righteousness with which He will fill and refresh every soul that believes. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace, not frightened by the thunders, but rejoicing in them as in the voice of a loving Father.

Shaking the Earth

There will come a time when God's voice will shake not only the earth, but also heaven: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." (Hebrews 12:26)

That will be "when God arises to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:19)

At that time many will "go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty." (Isaiah 2:19)

Yet at the same time others will not fear even though the shaking earth be removed. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

But they will say, "Lo, this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)

And why? Because they have learned to know the joyful sound of the thunder of God's power. That thunder which will shake the earth, and strike terror to the hearts of the wicked, will be but the voice of God repeating the covenant of peace to His people. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." (Isaiah 54:10) Blessed sound! How fearful to think that any should flee from the God who speaks peace!

Would you be able to rejoice at the coming of the Lord when His thunders shake the earth? Then learn the joyful sound now. Say from the heart, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people." (Psalm 85:8)

Yes; hear Him! "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

Listen to the voice of His law, and learn from it the joy of the Lord, the joy of His salvation.--Present Truth, August 18, 1898--Psalm 29:3-4.

Chapter 64

Psalm 30: Victory by Faith

Victory by Faith

Friday, July 1

"I will extol You, O Lord; for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me." (Psalm 30:1)

It should be remembered that we do not have to wait until the end before we can use these words. David's enemies were not all dead, by any means; but, trusting in the Lord, he was as sure of the final outcome as if all conflicts were over.

Remember this, that even though our enemies do rejoice over us, and taunt us with our seeming defeat and their victory, it is not the Lord who has caused them to do so; and nothing can stand except that which the Lord does. Only the word of the Lord endures forever, and He has spoken peace to us.

Thanking in Advance

Sabbath, July 2

"O Lord, my God, I cried unto You, and You have healed me." (Psalm 30:2)

You say: "But I have cried unto the Lord for healing, and He hasn't healed me!"

The reason for it is plainly to be seen in the doubt implied in your complaint. We are too apt to forget that true prayer consists of cries of joy and thanksgiving, as well as of desire. The thanksgiving must be expressed before the desired end is in sight, for nothing else is compatible with faith.

The free gift of life--healing life--has been bestowed upon all; the faith that profits by the gift thanks God for it before the senses perceive it. The ten lepers were not healed until, in obedience to Christ's instructions, they were on their way to the high priest to get his certificate to their healing.

Brought Up From the Grave

Sunday, July 3

"O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." (Psalm 30:3)

This is true of every person on earth, even of those who have never suffered from any severe illness. Our very existence is evidence of God's power manifested in raising the dead. The apostle Paul, speaking of Christ's death and resurrection, says, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Ephesians 4:9)

And the psalmist, speaking of his own birth, says, "My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." (Psalm 139:15)

All who die go back to the earth from which they were taken. Everybody who is alive may, therefore, with all his heart give expression to the words of our text for today.

Super-Abounding Grace

Monday, July 4

"Sing unto the Lord, O saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness; For His anger endures but a moment; in His favor is life." (Psalm 30:3-4)

We are to give thanks at the remembrance or memorial of God's holiness; and the evidence of His holiness is the fact that His grace far exceeds His

wrath. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds. Almost, if not quite, all other versions than the English render verse five as in the margin of the Revision: "His anger endures but a moment; but His favor a lifetime." (Psalm 30:4,RV,margin)

God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children in whom the same iniquities are manifested, but only to the third and fourth generations; while He shows mercy to thousands of generations of those that keep His commandments.

Weeping

Tuesday, July 5

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Isaiah 30:5)

"Endure" is too strong a word to apply to weeping, and the Hebrew text does not warrant it in this place. The Norwegian version has it, "In the evening weeping comes as a guest."

This agrees with the margin of our Revised Version, which gives the following literal rendering of the Hebrew: "Weeping may come in to lodge at even."

Why does it come at evening? Because in the dark, and especially when we are weary, we are likely to be cast down by that which, in the freshness of the morning light, is seen to be of no consequence.

Weeping does not come to stay; and if we would only look at evening and see things in the light of day, as becomes "children of the day," (1 Thessalonians 5:5) we should not even give it a night’s lodging. We need not, for we are told to "Rejoice in the Lord always." (Philippians 4:4)

Prosperity and Faith

Wednesday, July 6

"In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved." (Psalm 30:6)

That is better than many do; for it is not uncommon for people to mar all their manifest prosperity by fears of future ill. Still there isn't much virtue in feeling confident when there is no adversity in sight.

Far better is it to have our eyes open to see God always before us, and to know that because He is at our right hand in trouble, "a very present help," (Psalm 46:1) we shall not be moved even by the storm and cloud of affliction.

Immovable

Thursday, July 7

"Lord, by your favor You have made my mountains to stand strong." (Psalm 30:7)

That is why we can say with confidence, not only in prosperity, but in adversity as well: "I shall never be moved." (Psalm 30:6) "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." (Psalm 125 1-2)

It is better to have the Lord round about us than to be surrounded with mountain fortifications; for He sets the mountains fast by His power, and "the strength of the hills is His also." (Psalm 95:4)

Trading Sackcloth for Praise

Friday, July 8

"You have turned for me my mourning into dancing: You have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." (Psalm 30:11)

Many sincere people have clothed themselves with sackcloth, or worn hair shirts, supposing that they would thereby please God, and win His favor.

Others who do not actually put on the sackcloth, go about with as drawn and pitiful expressions as if they had it on, because they think that a smiling face is displeasing to heaven.

All such should learn that God never clothes people with sackcloth. None need think to gain His favor by torturing themselves. If all would but submit to Him, and allow Him to have His own way with them, He would speedily give them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isaiah 61:3)--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, July 1904--Psalm 30:1-11.

Chapter 65

Psalm 30: Joy in the Morning

"Weeping may come in to lodge at even, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

Pain is more difficult to endure in the night than in the daytime; and troubles always seem greatest at night.

Who has not often had this experience, that a case which seemed almost hopeless at night has presented a much brighter aspect in the morning?

We should learn a practical lesson from this, namely, never to decide any difficult question at night. Do not even consider it then, but wait till morning, when you are fresh, and God's new light will enable you to see the thing just as it is.

Always remember that no trouble is really as great as it seems to be at night.--Present Truth, January 9, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 30:5.

Chapter 66

Psalm 31: The Lord is Our Strength

"You are my Rock and my Fortress; therefore for your Name's sake lead me and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for Youare my strength." (Psalm 31:3-4)

Did you ever give serious thought to the fact that although the Bible represents us as being in the sorest need and the most pitiable condition of helplessness, it never once intimates that anything of all that is done for us is for our own sake? It is all for the Lord's own sake--for His name's sake.

Why? The reason is suggested in the first part of the text quoted. God is our Rock and our Fortress; He is our dwelling place; "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28) "He is our life." (Deuteronomy 30:20) "We are His offspring," (Acts 17:28) who nevertheless even down to old age and gray hairs are not separated from His being, but are borne by Him as part of His own life. Since we are so intimately connected with Him, His reputation, His good name, is bound up with ours. It is to His own personal interest to have us kept from evil. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

This means that God has taken our sins on himself, for Christ is the shining of His glory, the very impress of His being, and His name is in Him. So in the exhortation to the elders of the church we read: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

The Lord is personally interested in our salvation. He has "interposed himself by an oath," (Hebrews 6:17) swearing that He would do good, and only good, to us. That means that, like the most indulgent parent that He is,

He will give us the desire of our heart. He will not oppose our wills in any respect.

If we do not love life, and thrust it from us, He will let us have just what we labor and long for; but if we love life, and choose it, He will give us "more abundantly [of it,] above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

He gives us wrath, if we will have it, but no more than we have worked for and treasured up; because He has no pleasure in the death of any. But when we choose life and blessing, He bestows it in superabundance, because "He delights in mercy." (Micah 7:18) "You number my steps; do You not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You sew up my iniquity." (Job 14:16-17)

Is it not a most comforting assurance? How natural that He who numbers the hairs of our heads should also number our steps. He knows just how many steps we have taken in all our lives. He knows how many useless steps we have taken, how many steps in the forbidden places; but He sews up all the wickedness in a bag, and casts it into the depths of the sea, for His own sake. "He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (Psalm 23:3)

He guides us with His eye upon us: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with my eye." (Psalm 32:8)

How sure we are in our goings, when we are content to walk in His way.

What a multitude of worn out people there are in the world! How many there are with tired feet, wearied with the numerous steps they have taken, both profitably and uselessly. To all such the Lord promises rest. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

What a blessed thing to have our steps so guided by the Lord that we shall not get wearied and faint! Is it possible? The Lord says so; why not believe it, and find the joy of it?

If to any person these things seem fanciful, it is only because God is to him an unreality. If we regard Him as a Being sitting apart by himself, far off from us, looking at us with critical eyes, we shall find no practical support or joy. But when we accept Him as He is, "above all, and through all, and in all," (Ephesians 4:6) remembering that in the most literal sense He is our strength, we shall experience the joy of His salvation.

We expect certain things to be done by the little strength that we assume to be our own; we know that we can do a certain amount of work without getting weary; very well, take God himself for your strength, live in and from Him, and you will find the results as much greater than anything you have heretofore known or thought, as the infinite God is greater than puny man.--Present Truth, November 2, 1899--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 31:3-4.

Chapter 67

Psalm 31: A Friend in Adversity

A Friend in Adversity

Sabbath, July 9

"I will be glad and rejoice in your mercy: for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities." (Psalm 31:7)

There are many "fair-weather friends" in this world; but the Lord is not one of them. He is not one who is friendly in our prosperity, but who does not know us in adversity.

Yet many people regard Him as such, thinking and saying when trouble comes that God has forgotten them. He cannot forget us in affliction, because He himself suffers it.

It is not merely that He shares our affliction; the case is just the reverse; all trouble comes primarily on the Lord, and when we suffer we but share a portion of His suffering. Assured that God knows us in adversity, we may be unmoved though supposed friends know us not.

Set at Liberty

Sunday, July 10

"You have not shut me up into the hands of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large room." (Psalm 31:8)

The Lord delights in liberty, and never deprives anybody of it. It is Satan that keeps a prison; the Lord has none. Moreover, it is absolutely impossible for the enemy to shut up anybody against his will; for nothing can succeed except what the Lord does, and He, instead of shutting people up, opens the

prison doors. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17)

And His Spirit is everywhere: "Where shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10)

God fills all things: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

Therefore the soul that dwells in God has unlimited room.

Mercy in Time of Trouble

Monday, July 11

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble." (Psalm 31:9)

This is our recommendation to the mercy of the Lord. It is our rags, our filth, our hunger, our sickness, and our forsaken condition that plead for us with Him; and no such plea is ever made in vain. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:11)

And where He sees affliction, He is always "moved with compassion." (Mark 6:34)

If we are in trouble and distress, then we may be sure that the Lord is more attentive to us, if possible, than at any other time. "[He] comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:4)--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, July 1904--Psalm 31:7-9.

Chapter 68

Psalm 32: Songs of Deliverance

"And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psalm 27:6)

It is with "songs of deliverance" that the Lord compasses us about:

"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah." (Psalm 32:7)

That is to say, our safety is in singing the praises of God,--not in merely singing songs that somebody else has written, and which may mean nothing to us, but in singing and making melody in the heart; sometimes even without words, but always with the spirit and with the understanding. (1 Corinthians 14:15)

It is not enough to praise the Lord for what He has done for us; true faith gives Him thanks for deliverance yet to come, with the enemies all round us.

It was when Israel sang and gave thanks to God for His ever enduring mercy that God set ambushments against their enemies: "It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There comes a great multitude against you from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, And said, O Lord God of our fathers, are not You God in heaven? and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand You? Are not

You our God, who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham your friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built You a sanctuary therein for your name, saying, If, when evil comes upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in your presence, (for your name is in this house,) and cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon You. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, theirwives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken you, all Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you king Jehoshaphat, Thus says the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and you shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you. And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe His prophets, so shall you prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments

against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about." (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)--Present Truth, July 28, 1904--Psalm 32:7.

Chapter 69

Psalm 33: The Creative Word

The power of the word of God is best appreciated when we consider the work of creation. In Psalm 33 we read: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as a heap; He laid up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:6-9)

From this it is plain to be seen that the entire material of the earth and all that is in it, sprung from the word of God. We cannot comprehend the power of Divinity, but we can see from what is plainly declared, that the word of the Lord is not empty air, but that it is real substance. It is as though the world existed in the word, before it became in the shape in which it now is. When God's word was uttered, then there was the earth and the heavens.

When the word of God names a thing, then that thing named is formed. Whatever is described by the word, exists in that word. Thus it is impossible for God to lie, for His word makes the thing so. So we read that: "[God] calls those things that be not as though they were." (Romans 4:17)

That is something that can be done by God alone. It is true that men sometimes undertake it, but their word does not make the thing so. When a man speaks of a thing that is not as though it were, there is only one word that can be used to describe his action. It is a lie.

But God cannot lie, yet He speaks of those things that be not as though they were. For instance, God speaks of a thing that has no existence. He calls it by name, as though it were well known. The instant that His word goes forth, that instant a thing exists. Consider well the statement of the Psalmist: "He spoke and it was." (Psalm 33:9)

Not that He spoke, and after that it was performed, as a superficial reading of the texts might lead one to think. That idea would not be gained if the translators had not inserted the word "done," in italics. It is true that it was done then, but it was the word of the Lord that did it.

The idea would be better conveyed by rendering the passage literally, as we have, "He spoke, and it was." As soon as He spoke, there everything stood. Whatever God's word says, is, because His word conveys the thing.

This is why in prophecy things are often spoken of as already done. He speaks of those things that be not as though they were already done, not, as is sometimes said, because in His purpose they exist, but because they exist in His word. They are as freely in existence as they can ever be, although they do not yet appear to human sight.

It is for this reason that the word of the Lord is strength and comfort to those who believe in it; for the word which is written in the Bible is the word of God, the same as that which created the heavens and the earth. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2 Timothy 3:16)

That is, it is "God-breathed." Now remember that "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6)

The breath of God, which has creative energy in it, is that which gives us the precepts and promises of the Bible. That creative word is the power of the Gospel. For the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believes; and the power of God is revealed in the things that are made. (See Romans 1:16,20) The power of redemption is the power of creation, for redemption is creation. Thus, the Psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." (Psalm 51:10)

The apostle Paul says that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What is this new creation that is wrought in the Gospel? It is righteousness, for the same apostle exhorted us to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)

Righteousness means good works, and therefore the apostle says:

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained [or "prepared"] that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10) "The word of the Lord is right." (Psalm 33:4)

He speaks righteousness. So just as He spoke to emptiness and there the earth was, so He speaks to the soul that is destitute of righteousness, and if that word is received, the righteousness of that word is upon that man. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:23-25)

To declare is to speak; and so when God declares His righteousness in Christ for the remission of sins, righteousness is spoken into and upon that man, to take the place of his sins, which are taken away. And it is not simply a passive righteousness that is thus declared upon the man, but a real, active righteousness, for the word of the Lord is alive, and God's righteousness is real and active.

This, in brief, is what the story of creation means to those who believe it. Satan would fain have men think that it is only a poem (as though a poem could not be true), or only a fiction gotten up to amuse people. This is the means which he has taken in these days to undermine the Gospel.

If man once looks lightly upon creation, the force of the Gospel is weakened for them. Satan is even content that men should call redemption a greater work than that of creation, for thereby they are not in the least exalting the work of redemption, but depreciating it. Redemption and

creation are the same work, and redemption is exalted only as creation is greatly appreciated.

It will occur to some that since this is the case, that which commemorates redemption must also commemorate creation. This is true, but of that we shall speak at another time.--PP Editor's note: The articles Waggoner refers to, appeared in the December 15, 1892 edition of Present Truth, under the titles, "Creation and Redemption," and "True Sabbath Keeping." The first article is included in the Fragments Collection, Vol. 1, "Grace Greater Than Sin," and also was incorporated into Chapter 1 in the book, The Gospel in Creation. The second article is included in the Fragments Collection, Vol. 9B, "Sabbath Compendium." The argument in this latter article, is that the Sabbath, which commemorates creation, also commemorates redemption.--Present Truth, October 20, 1892--Psalm 33:6-9.

Chapter 70

Psalm 33: The Gospel is Power

The Gospel is Power

Tuesday, July 12

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6) "And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25)

The last announcement of the Gospel message, the fullness of it, to prepare people for the coming of the Lord, calls upon them to worship God especially as the one who made heaven and earth and sea. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Revelation 14:6-7)

The reason for this is that the Gospel is the application of the power of creation to human lives. He who can create can do anything: and those who always recognize God's eternal power and divinity, and who continually worship Him as Creator, can never depart from Him, nor be overcome by the enemy.

God's Power in Nature

Wednesday, July 13

"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him; For He spoke and it was, He commanded and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:8-9)

No one can see the great mountains, or view the sea when the storm has lashed it to fury, without a feeling of awe; but the power that inspires this awe is that of God. "Do you not fear me? says the Lord: will you not tremble at my presence, which has placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jeremiah 5:22)

He who can make the shifting sand a bound for the mighty waves of the sea, can make feeble humanity a bulwark against the rage of Satan.

God's Promises Will Prevail

Thursday, July 14

"The counsel of the Lord stands for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." (Psalm 33:11)

The Lord can never be taken by surprise or thrown into confusion. That which He has promised, He is fully able to perform. Every purpose of His will be carried out to the minutest detail, no matter who or how many set themselves against it. Read the text for today, and then remember that "we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His will." (Ephesians 1:11,RV)

And His thoughts toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, July 1904--Psalm 33:6-11.

Chapter 71

Psalm 33: The Measure of Mercy

The Psalmist prayed, "Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, but according as we hope in You." (Psalm 33:22)

This is an inspired prayer. It was prompted by the Holy Spirit, which helps our infirmities, and teaches what we ought to pray for. Therefore it is certain that the prayer is a proper one. It is just as certain that the standard of giving, which it calls for, is a just one. Since God directed the prayer to be uttered, that is evidence that He will grant the request.

And what is the request? That the mercy of God should be bestowed upon us to the degree that we hope for it. What a wonderful range that is, within which we are permitted to draw upon the heavenly treasury! It is as though God has given us cheques on the bank of heaven, with His name assigned to them, with the privilege of filling in any amount we wish.

The prayer of the Psalmist is equivalent to a promise on the part of God that He will give us as much as we hope for. But we remember that the mercy that we hope for is to be given us, and not what we would simply like to have. "For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?" (Romans 8:24)

That is, we hope only for that thing which we do not see with our natural eyes. Hope means expectation as well as desire. Therefore we find that hope is inseparably connected with faith, and very closely allied to it. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

And our hope in God is the measure of the mercy that we receive from Him. So it is pretty hard to distinguish between faith and hope.

Perhaps the process by which the blessings of God are obtained, may briefly be noted thus:

1. Overpowered by a sense of need, we desire something better than we have--something substantial.

2. The rich promises of God are opened before us.

3. Faith in God's word creates a hope that they may be ours;

4. Faith appropriates just to the amount of our hope.

But the way in which it is done matters not, so long as we know that the grace bestowed will be according to the measure of our faith and hope. Since we may have whatever our faith in God's Word prompts us to hope for, it is evident that our destiny is really in our own hands.

Nor need we fear that we shall exhaust the treasury of mercy. The word of truth says: "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5) "As the heaven is high above the earth, so is His mercy toward them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:11)

So when we make perhaps according to our largest hopes, we may know that there is still enough left and to spare; for: "[He] is able to do it exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)--Present Truth, July 17, 1890--Psalm 33:22.

Chapter 72

Psalm 33: Exhaustless Stores of Mercy

"Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You." (Psalm 33:22)

What infinite resources there are for us in that sentence. It is true that it is only a prayer, but it is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is equal to a promise by the Holy Spirit. It is a promise that we may have, from the mercy of God, anything that we hope for.

We cannot exhaust His mercy. Not only may we have all that we hoped for from God, but: "[He is] able to do it exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

And whatever God is able to do, He will do. Then let us put on love, the bond of perfectness, (Colossians 3:14) "that hopes all things," (1 Corinthians 13:7) and all things are ours.--Present Truth, August 10, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 33:22.

Chapter 73

Psalm 34: Genuine Praise

"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth." (Psalm 34:1)

We wonder sometimes how many people, even among professed Christians, really praise the Lord. We do not mean a praise mingled with doubts, a praise that is only as a tinkling cymbal, or a cracked bell, but a praise that is genuine, that is not put on. The man or woman who has tasted the sweets of pardoning love, cannot help telling it to others.

Would that Christians would praise the Lord as the birds sing--because they cannot help it. Their praise is sincere. It is true worship. It is the Lord's life flowing in and through them. There is joy in living, because life is joy. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." (Psalm 103:2)--Present Truth, March 8, 1900--Psalm 34:1.

Chapter 74

Psalm 34: Delivered from Fear

"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)

There is nothing more terrible than fear. "Fear has torment." (1 John 4:18)

It makes no difference if there is no actual danger, the fear of an imaginary evil is as real as the fear of a known peril. But out of all fear the Lord delivers them that trust Him.--Present Truth, October 4, 1894--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 34:4.

Chapter 75

Psalm 34: Deliverance from Prison

"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

This was demonstrated in a most marked manner in the case of Peter. Herod had already killed James, and had taken Peter, intending to kill him also. Sixteen soldiers were detailed to keep the apostle till the time of execution, and the night before the event was expected to take place he was in a cell, bound with two chains to two soldiers who were inside with him, one on each side. Surely there is no hope that Peter can escape the will of his enemies.

But Peter had many influential friends who were interested in his case, and who exerted themselves to secure his release. So they got up a grand petition in his behalf. Not to Herod, for that would have been useless. The need was too urgent to warrant their wasting time on a stubborn and rebellious under official, so they addressed their petition direct to the highest authority. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." (Acts 12:5)

I have said that Peter's friends were influential, and so they were, even in the highest circles; for "The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working." (James 5:16,RV)

What was the result of this petition? "Behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shonein the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals. And so he did. And he said unto him, Cast your garment about you, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and knew not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leads unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out,

and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." (Acts 12:7-11)

That is only one out of many deliverances. At one time the chief priests and the rulers of the Jews "laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught." (Acts 5:18-21)

Later on, when the ruler sent to bring them to court, the keepers were found foolishly guarding an empty prison.

Yet again, Paul and Silas had been cast in the prison, and the jailer had been charged to keep them safely: "Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's hands were loose." (Acts 16:24-26)

And so we might proceed, recounting wonderful deliverances by the angel of the Lord. There were the three Hebrews who were delivered from a fiery furnace. The Lord himself came to their rescue. Mark the statement that: "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him." (Psalm 34:7)

The Lord himself came down to share the flames with them. So the angel of the Lord was in the cell with Peter before he was delivered. When those who fear the Lord are cast in the prison for His sake, the angel of the Lord is with them, and no prison bars and bolts and soldiers can keep them one minute after God decides that it is best for them to come out. Until that time they are content to stay, as shown by the peaceful sleep of Peter, and the joyful songs of Paul and Silas.

This calm confidence in God comes only from a knowledge of His power to effect still greater deliverances. The promise is, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:26) "[He] gave himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4) "For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose them that are appointed to death." (Psalm 102:19-20)

Those who know the power of this deliverance from sin, and all may know it if they believe God's Word, need not and will not have any fear of what man can do to them. We may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Hebrews 13:6) "Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keeps truth for ever; Which executes judgment for the oppressed; which gives food to the hungry. The Lord looses the prisoners; The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises them up that are bowed down." (Psalm 146:5-8)--Present Truth, October 17, 1895--Psalm 34:7.

Chapter 76

Psalm 34: Ample Protection

"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

That this is not a mere figure of speech, but an actual fact, as shown by many instances in the Bible. Let us note a few illustrations.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had come up with a vast army against Jerusalem, and had written the most boastful and insulting letter to Hezekiah, the king. Hezekiah placed the matter before the Lord, and received this assurance concerning the king of Assyria, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with a shield, nor cast a mount against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, says the Lord. For I will defend the city to save it." (2 Kings 19:32-34)

That was a promise of complete deliverance, and here is the record of its fulfillment: "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord wentforth, and smote the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and return, and dwelt in Nineveh." (2 Kings 19:35-36)

There is no one who may not have as great protection, for the promise is, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

And the Lord is not content with sending forth a single angel to protect His servants. When Elisha and his servant were surrounded by the Syrian army,--horses, and chariots, and a great host,--and the servant was terrified, the prophet assured him, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:16)

Elisha was sure of this, even though he could not see his protectors, but the servant had not so strong faith, and so the Lord mercifully opened his eyes; "and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses andchariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17)

With their aid Elisha lead the whole Syrian army where he would.

When Christ was surrounded by the soldiers and the mob, with the traitor Judas at their head, and Peter offered forcible resistance, the Lord bade him put up his sword, and said, "Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." (Matthew 26:53)

We are assured that: "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 5:17)

The Father's love for us is equal to His love for Him. "I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me." (John 17:23)

Therefore we know that in any time of need we could pray to the Father, and He would send to our aid "more than twelve legions of angels," if so many were necessary. There are "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11) of them, even "an innumerable company of angels." (Hebrews 12:22)

And they are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Hebrews 1:14)

There is therefore no lack of their help. Now let us make a little calculation. "The angel of the Lord," who came to the aid of Hezekiah, proved himself equal at the very least, to one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. We know full well that he could just as easily have turned back Sennacherib's army if it had been ten times as large; but we will take the number given, counting one angel equal in a contest to one hundred and eighty-five thousand men.

But the Lord has promised us "more than twelve legions of angels," if we need them. A Roman legion was about six thousand men. Twelve legions make seventy-two thousand men. One hundred and eighty-five thousand multiplied by seventy-two thousand, gives us more than thirteen thousand millions.

That is, the "more than twelve legions of angels," which the Lord holds at the service of each of His children, are, at the very lowest calculation, equal in fighting power to about fourteen thousand millions of men, or ten times the population of the whole earth. [PP Editor's note: Waggoner wrote this in 1896, when Earth's population was about 1.4 billion. Today (2019) it is 7.5 billion, so the minimum "fighting power" of the angels, according to his calculation, is still double the population of the Earth. This would assume, of course, that every man, woman, and child, on the earth was a well-equipped soldier of war!] With such an overwhelming force at his disposal, the child of God is safe anywhere. He needs not the protection of earthly powers, for he has power with him infinitely greater than all theirs combined; so that he may say, "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me in this will I be confident." (Psalm 27:1,3) "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." (Isaiah 12:2)--Present Truth, January 16, 1896--Psalm 34:7.

Chapter 77

Psalm 34: The Knowledge of Want

The Word says, "There is no want to them that fear Him." (Psalm 34:9)

That is because when we know the Lord, we no sooner have a knowledge of want than the want is supplied. The revelation or sense of want comes from Him. So when we feel the want in our soul, it is God's way of saying He has that thing to give us.

You want righteousness, do you? That is, you feel the lack of it. How did you find out that you wanted it? who told you your need? The Lord let you know that want. How did He make you know it? Simply by the revelation of the thing which will supply the want.

If we were to go into the wilds of Africa, out of the tract of civilization entirely, where the people know absolutely nothing of the conveniences of modern life, should we find the people begging for watches, for instance? Of course not; they would know nothing about such things. But in our cities a boy doesn't get very old before he wants a watch. The knowledge of that thing, and the possibility of it, create the want.

Why is it that you want righteousness? It is only because the Lord has revealed righteousness to you, the knowledge of right; for there can be no knowledge of wrong without the corresponding knowledge of right. We know a thing is wrong because it is contrary to the right.

In every heart there are desires, greater or less, for a better life. We do not know how many discouraged souls there are longing to be delivered from the degradation into which they have fallen. They do not know how to get deliverance; and the reason is that they do not know love. They have not learned that God is love, and they have not seen God's love manifested in those with whom they have associated, and so they do not know how to have their longings supplied.

But every desire of the human heart for anything better, every longing for righteousness, has been created by the Lord, and created in order that the soul might hold to Him for the supply of the want.

Whenever we want to be better than we are, the very moment that want comes, it is the plain language of God to us, saying, "Here is something that you lack; take it."

This is why there is no want to them that fear God; for every want is supplied in the very knowledge of it, if we but know it. In Christ there is everything, even the fullness of God. He is the "Desire of all nations," (Haggai 2:7) and in Him is all that men can desire.

Illegitimate Desire

Men may, it is true, desire many things that are not in Christ. But we can all testify from our own experience that the receiving of those things did not satisfy the desire. There was still a want there. Then that was not the real thing that we wanted, after all. We thought it would satisfy us, but a trial of it showed that there was no satisfaction in it.

It is as if we should sit at a table, hungry, and should try first one thing and then another, without finding the hunger satisfied. At last we find just the thing which the taste seemed to be calling for and which satisfied.

There are longings as of the intemperate man for drink. He drinks; but he is not satisfied. The more he drinks, the more the longing is cultivated. There is this and that pleasure that men desire and indulge in, which do not satisfy. The Lord says, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isaiah 55:2)

There is not a longing in man that is not, unconsciously to himself it may be, really a drawing out after God, and for something which God can supply. So David says, "My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God." (Psalm 84:2)

The nature of the flesh is sinful, and always sinful. But all this longing of the flesh is dissatisfaction. There is only one thing that can satisfy, and that is God. He is the Desire of all nations, and He satisfies "the desire of every living thing": "You open your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

If you really do want to be better, if you want God's righteousness, just stop and thank Him that He has given it to you. "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)--Present Truth, February 15, 1894--Psalm 34:9.

Chapter 78

Psalm 34: Keeping the Tongue

"Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile." (Psalm 34:13)

This is a test that ought to be repeated over and over with increasing emphasis, for evil speaking has come to be the bane of society, and the curse of the church. With many, even professed Christians, it is so easy to listen to and circulate an evil report against their fellowmen. It may or it may not be true, but whether true or false it has the same blighting effect.

Evil speaking emanates from the "father of lies." (John 8:44)

He is the "accuser of the brethren." (Revelation 12:10)

Not so Christ. Though persecuted and slandered and insulted, He uttered no retaliatory word in reply. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again." (1 Peter 2:23)

How restful and satisfactory it is, when one at the close of day, can look back over it and feel that in his intercourse with the people, no word of censure or criticism or evil speaking has passed his lips.

As the flesh which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness was to them a momentary gratification, but with it came leanness of soul, so while it no doubt does afford a morbid pleasure to gossipers to revel in the weaknesses of a brother, yet the one who indulges in it is soon shorn of his spiritual strength.

If one cannot speak well of a person, it is best to say no ill of him, at least. An evil-speaking tongue is a sure index to a low state of religion. The apostle James says, "If any man among you seems to be religious and bridles not the tongue, but deceives his own heart, that man's religion is vain." (James 1:26)--Present Truth, March 1, 1900--Psalm 34:13.

Chapter 79

Psalm 35: Our Cause is His

Our Cause is His

Friday, July 15

"Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." (Psalm 35:1)

The reader should know that the word rendered "plead" in this verse is in the Hebrew text identical with the one rendered "strive;" thus the literal rendering is given in the Revision: "Strive, O Lord, with them that strive with me."

The sum of the matter is that God makes himself responsible for our case, and proposes to do all our fighting for us. Whoever attacks us has God to contend with; His victory is our victory; and we may be confident in the assurance that in order to overcome us while we are trusting in God, the devil would have to overcome God himself.

The Lord Defends Us

Sabbath, July 16

"Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help." (Psalm 35:2)

No prayer for help can ever be offered to the Lord in vain. We may make foolish requests--requests for things that would be harmful for us. But no cry of need, no plea for help in trouble, no matter from whom, was ever unheeded by the Lord.

Whoever asks for help, asks according to God's will, and may be sure of receiving that for which he asks. What a comfort to know that whenever any foes assail us, God himself takes His weapons and stands up for our defense.

Faith Better Than Weapons

Sunday, July 17

"Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me." (Psalm 35:3)

How often, when we are in trouble, if our eyes could be opened to discern spiritual realities, we should see a column of armed warriors standing between us and the enemy, guarding us from danger.

The province of faith is to enable us to see them, even when they are invisible, and to give us the same sense of security as if with our natural eyes we saw God with a spear in His hand, stopping the way of our pursuers.

The devil knows that he has no power against the Lord, and will not attempt to make any stand against Him; but he endeavors by roaring to frighten us so that we will flee from our place of shelter, and allow him to seize us when we are defenseless.

The Lord is Salvation

Monday, July 18

"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." (Psalm 35:3)

We must not think that by this prayer we induce God to speak words of encouragement to us that He has not before thought of. It is He who teaches us to pray.

The need of which we are conscious, and which moves us to ask for help, is known to us only by God's offer of the help which will supply it. This prayer is only for the purpose of making us realize that the great God himself is indeed our salvation.

It is not enough to say that He saves us: He is the salvation, saving by His own life.

Divine Intervention

Tuesday, July 19

"Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul, let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt." (Psalm 35:4)

Although David wrote this psalm, the Spirit of Christ in him (Compare 2 Samuel 22:1-2 and 1 Peter 1:10-11) prompted the words. This, therefore, is Christ's own prayer, not a prayer for himself alone, but one which He utters in and for afflicted humanity.

When the mob came out against Jesus, they went backward and fell to the ground as soon as He spoke. (John 18:6) Our text teaches us that it may be even the same with those who come out against us.

We must not wait until we see such things ourselves, before we trust; but the words of the Lord must beget such confidence in us that we shall see them.

God is Our Defense

Wednesday, July 20

"Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them." (Psalm 35:5)

Our faith in God's protecting care is assured by the completeness with which we commit the keeping of ourselves to Him. To worry about the future, about support and protection, is the characteristic of heathenism. (See Matthew 6:31-32)

Our confidence in God as our defense is shown by our refraining from trying to defend ourselves. Whenever we undertake to defend ourselves from any kind of attack, we show that we do not believe that God will put our persecutors to flight, and save us.

Praise During Warfare

Thursday, July 21

"And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in His salvation." (Psalm 35:9)

When will the soul be joyful in God, and rejoice in His salvation? At the very time when God is fighting for it; that is, even while the battle is raging.

We shall not withhold our praises until we see the outcome, but, even before the battle begins, we shall be so sure that the victory will be ours that we shall sing for joy.

It is with the praise of the helpless that God stills the enemy and the avenger. (Compare Psalm 8:2 and Matthew 21:16)

Turning Defeat to Victory

Friday, July 22

"All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto You, which delivers the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoils him?" (Psalm 35:10)

Note that the deliverance spoken of in this psalm is from physical as well as from spiritual ills. "All my bones" shall rejoice in salvation.

Note also that God delivers the poor and needy from those who are spoiling him. We are not to lose heart, and think that God has failed us, even

if we are being plundered; for it is as easy for God to turn defeat into victory as it is to repulse the destroyer before he has attacked us.

Prosperity for the Afflicted and Friends

Sabbath, July 23

"Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants." (Psalm 35:27)

Remember that God takes no pleasure in our adversity; it pleases Him to see us prosperous. The first psalm assures us that those who wholly trust the Lord, not in any way interposing their way against His, shall have prosperity in all things. That is, the Lord brings only prosperity; even adversity in His hands works good.

It is important, also, to remember that blessings come not only to the one in trouble, but also to those who favor his cause. This should teach us always to sympathize with the afflicted, and to take the part of the oppressed.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, July 1904--Psalm 35:1-27.

Chapter 80

Psalm 36: The Best Search-Light

"For with You is the fountain of life; in your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9)

The life of Christ is the light of the world. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4) "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) So when the Psalmist says, "in your light shall we see light," (Psalm 36:9) it is equivalent to saying that in the life of Christ we shall see light.

How many people are groping in darkness for light. Professed Christians stumble over hard things in the Bible, because they do not use the light that would make everything plain.

So, many people refuse to accept the life of Christ, because there are some things that they do not understand. It would be as reasonable for a man to refuse to take a lantern, because he cannot see anything in the dark.

When people take the life of Christ for their own, and understand that all the Scriptures are but the reflection of Christ, many difficult things in the Bible will be perfectly clear. It is much easier to find a thing when we look for it in the light, than when we grope in the dark for it.

He who accepts the life of Christ has the key to the whole Bible, for the life of the word is the life of Christ.--Present Truth, October 6, 1892--Psalm 36:9.

Chapter 81

Psalm 36: The Water of Life

"For with You is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9)

With God is the fountain, the well-spring of life. He himself is "the Fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

This is demonstrated to us by the river of water of life, which flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1) It is a real stream, as plainly to be seen by the inhabitants of the heavenly country as any earthly stream is by those who dwell on its banks. Nevertheless it is spiritual, it is indeed the Spirit, for the Spirit of God is living water. "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...)" (John 7:38,39)

But, "spiritual things ... are spiritually discerned;" (2 Corinthians 2:13-14) and the glorified saints, having spiritual bodies, will be able to see the Spirit of God, even as now with our physical eyes we see each other. "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

And in the world to come we shall be able to see the Spirit of life proceeding from God in a never-failing stream.

In order to be able to see spiritual things, we must become spiritual. When the Lord comes, and the righteous dead are raised, both dead and living are changed to immortality, and given spiritual bodies. (See 1 Corinthians 15:42-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) All the change that takes place at that time is in the body, outwardly, and this will take place only with those who have previously been led by the Spirit, and walked in the Spirit, having the mind of the Spirit. "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9)

The change at the coming of the Lord will be simply the last step in the change from glory to glory. God wishes us now to be filled with the Spirit, and if this be the case, then we shall be able even now to discern spiritual things, even though our eyes cannot see them. The world receives not the Spirit of God, "because it sees Him not." (John 14:17)

But believers are well acquainted with Him, and can discern His presence, although the eyes that they now have are not fitted to see Him.

We have read that God is the Fountain of living waters. In harmony with this is: "A brook, whose waters make glad the city of God, is the Most High in His habitation." (Psalm 46:4,Polychrome rendering)

God himself is the stream of life, for God is Spirit. So we read of the new earth: "There the glorious Lord will be to us a place of broad rivers andstreams." (Isaiah 33:21)

The reason for this is that: "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us." (Isaiah 33:22)

He saves us by His life,--the cleansing stream,--which flows from the throne, the foundation of which is righteousness and justice, that is, His everlasting law. The Lamb in the midst of the throne leads the redeemed unto "fountains of waters of life." (Revelation 7:17,RV)

That fountain, God's own life, will be our drink, and the life of everything that grows from the earth. Thus will it be as plain to the eyes of the redeemed saints that they live directly from the life of God, as it now is to any man that we live by food and drink.

The good things of God, however, are not reserved for the future. God has given us himself in Christ, and so with Him all things. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup." (Psalm 16:5)

Even now God chooses men, and causes them to approach unto Him, that they may dwell in His courts. "Blessed is the man whom You choose, and cause to approach unto You, that he may dwell in your courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple." (Psalm 65:4)

By the blood of Christ we are "made nigh." (Ephesians 2:13)

By that blood,--the stream of life from out God's throne,--we have boldness to enter into the holy place where God dwells. (Hebrews 10:19) "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." (Psalm 92:13) "How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and you shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with You is the Fountain of life." (Psalm 36:7-9)

So we see that the river of God's pleasure is the river of life flowing from His throne. The word translated "pleasures" in this text is "Edna," the feminine form of the Hebrew word "Eden." The Garden of Eden is the garden of pleasure, and from its waters God gives us to drink even now. The river that flowed from Eden divided and watered the whole earth. "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: which compasses the whole landof Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: that compasses thewhole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: which goes towardthe east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates." (Genesis 2:10-14)

Eden is no more in this earth, but God still allows men to drink of its waters. Who may drink? "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

God took the man whom He had made, and (literally) "caused him to rest in the garden of Eden." (For example, see Genesis 2:15, in the Literal Emphasis Translation) In Eden there is rest. "We who have believed do enter into rest ... [for] there remains a rest to the people of God," (Hebrews 4:3,9) a rest that comes to us from Eden. That rest is the Lord's own rest--the Sabbath of the Lord. Rest is delight, and so the Lord says, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. ... Then shall you delight yourself in the Lord." (Isaiah 58:13-14)

Those who with all their hearts believe God, worshiping Him as Creator of heaven and earth, rest in His almighty power, and delight their souls in Him. They drink of the water of Eden, and keep the Sabbath that was given to man in Eden.

Just as such ones have passed from death unto life, even while yet in this mortal body, even so they pass from the old earth to the new, even while inhabiting this sin-cursed earth. To them, "all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In Christ, who is, and is to come, future things are made present. The Spirit is the firstfruits of the inheritance. So everything that they see (that is, everything that God has made) is to them only the image of the invisible. Every gift of God is a medium conveying the Holy Spirit. So in the rain that comes down from heaven and waters the earth, they receive the water of life, the Holy Spirit poured out upon all flesh.

Even now, as in the beginning, the river of Eden waters the earth, and they who know the Lord delight in it. To them heavenly things are not mere speculations nor simply possible future enjoyments, but present living realities. They "sit with Christ in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 2:6) "You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water." (Psalm 65:9)

According to the marginal note this text would read:

"You visit the earth when you have caused it to desire [rain]; You greatly enrich it with the river of God."

God creates a desire, a longing, for himself, and then He supplies that desire. He alone can satisfy the desire of every living thing. The reason why all do not consciously take of Him, and delight in Him, is that they do not believe or realize this truth. So they go on unsatisfied. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." (Psalm 107:8-9) "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Yes; every shower that falls from heaven, enriching the earth, and causing it to bring forth fruit, is to those who live in constant recognition of God, a rain of righteousness.

God's witness of himself is that He does good, and sends rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, so that men can rejoice in abundance of food. "Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17) "[He] sends rain on the unjust as well as on the just," (Matthew 5:45) in order that they may accept His righteousness, and turn from their evil ways. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He has clothed me with the garment of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causesthe things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:10-11)

How does the earth bring forth her bud? It is by drinking in the rain that falls upon it. Even so will the Lord cause righteousness to spring forth. How? Just as the earth brings forth her fruit, that is, by the rain. The rain from heaven, recognized as coming direct from God's throne, from God himself, and acknowledged as bringing to us the Holy Spirit, will cause us to bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

The same thing that makes the earth to bring forth fruit will also make them bear fruit to holiness, if they truly believe; for belief brings them into the same relation to God--the same state of receptivity--that the earth is.

Then, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near," (Isaiah 55:6) and, "He [will] come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hosea 10:12)--Present Truth, August 25, 1898--Psalm 36:9.

Chapter 82

Psalm 37: Punishment of the Wicked

"Fret not yourself because of the evil-doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as thegreen herb. ... For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shalldiligently considered his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:1-2,9-10)

Compare this with: "For as you have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 16)

We should like to know how these texts can be harmonized with the doctrine of the endless existence of the wicked. That theory cannot be held except by denying these texts, or, what is the same thing, ignoring them. "For such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off." (Psalm 37:22) "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ... Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 5:20,23-24) "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." (Hosea 13:2-3)

Dr. Scott, after quoting this text, says, "i.e., violently and speedily made to banish and disappear." The Speaker's Commentary says of this passage:

"The tone of indignant derision passes into that of stern wrath the inflexibility of the purpose to punish is expressed by the accumulation of four several images, all describing utter extermination."

That is just what the language signifies,--"utter extermination." If it does not mean that, we do not see how it can be anything. The preceding texts have compared the wicked to the most combustible material--stubble and chaff. In the following, the prophet makes the case stronger yet; the wicked are declared to be stubble: "For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ... And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts." (Malachi 4:1,3)

With this agree the words of John the Baptist: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

We turn once more to the 37th Psalm: "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." (Psalm 37:20)

The psalmist could have given no illustration of the final destiny of the wicked that would have been more forcible to the minds of the Jews. Every morning and every evening, according to the law, a lamb was placed on the altar and consumed. Beside this, every sin-offering, whether it was a bullock, a goat, or a lamb, (Leviticus 4) was burned upon the altar.

They saw the fat of lambs continually vanishing into smoke, and in that column of the ascending smoke they had an everpresent reminder of the fate of the incorrigibly wicked. They knew that when the fat was placed in that sacrificial fire, it was not preserved, but was speedily destroyed; and so when the psalmist said, "the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away," (Psalm 37:20) they knew that the fate of the unrepentant sinners would be utter extinction. The

last part of the verse only confirms the first clause: "The wicked shall perish;" (Psalm 37:20) for as we have already seen, the word "perish" means: To be destroyed; to go to destruction; to pass away; to come to nothing; to be blotted from existence.

"Why," says one, "you are an annihilationist."

Our reply is, We believe what we have just been reading from the Bible; if that is what you call annihilationism, alright; we shall not be frightened from our position, whatever name may be applied to us. This word "annihilation" is a great bug-bear to many.

Say they, "It is impossible for matter to be annihilated."

Now while we should not dare place any limit to God's power, we do not believe that He will blot out of existence any of the matter which He has created; but that He will and does change the form or combination of parts of many things, we have the most abundant evidence. Webster defines "annihilate" thus:

1. To reduce to nothing; to destroy the existence of; to cause to cease to be.

2. To destroy the form or peculiar distinctive properties of, so that the specific thing no longer exists, as, to annihilate a forest by cutting and carrying away the trees, though the timber may still exist.

The Bible says that: "the wicked shall not be;" (Psalm 37:10) that: "they shall be as though they had not been." (Obadiah 1:16)

There was a time once when they were not; they had no existence; but the matter of which they are composed was even then in existence. So likewise the matter of which they are composed will remain after they cease to be.

When the fat was placed on the altar it was destroyed; no one removed it, yet in a little while there was no fat there. What had become of it? It had

become smoke. The fat was annihilated, if you please; but the matter which had composed it was not.

Thus, we are told, will it be with the wicked. If anyone disagrees with the statements concerning the wicked, his quarrel is with the Bible, not with us.--Signs of the Times, December 18, 1884--Psalm 37:1-22.

Chapter 83

Psalm 37: A Comparison

"Fret not yourself [or, be not angry] because of evildoers, neitherbe envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." (Psalm 37:1-2) "Surely You did set them in slippery places: You cast them downinto destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." (Psalm 73:18-19)

Since this is the end of evil-doers, it is evident that whoever envies them, is in reality envying their reward. How foolish! Surely none who consider the end of wickedness, can envy anybody's ill-gotten wealth, or be angry when selfish men use oppression. "Envy not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." (Proverbs 3:31) "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed in security." (Psalm 37:3)

He who trusts in the Lord will do good, and he will dwell securely. For, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." (Psalm 125:1-2) "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way [roll your way] unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:4-5)

This is a promise that is as sure as the existence of God. In it is the means for the solution of all difficult questions, and the removal all labor troubles, if men would believe it.

But men refuse to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. They become fretful and angry, and take matters into their own hands, and so spoil everything.

In the world there will be trouble until the coming of the Lord, because men will be lovers of their own self; but this need not disturb the Christian.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace." (John 16:33)--Present Truth, November 2, 1893--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 37:1-5.

Chapter 84

Psalm 37: Contentment, not Envy

Contentment, not Envy

Sunday, July 24

"Fret not yourself because of evil doers, neither be envious against the workers of iniquity." (Psalm 37:1)

It is very foolish to be envious at the prosperity of others. We should rejoice at the prosperity of the righteous, whatever our own circumstances; and if the wicked seem to prosper, we should remember that it cannot last.

If we envy them, we are in reality desiring to share in their downfall; for: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." (Psalm 92:7)

The only wise course is to be content with what we have.

Safety and Security Come From Trust

Monday, July 25

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and feed securely." (Psalm 37:3,RV,margin)

Do not think that our dwelling in the land is pay for our good deeds; we do good only as the result of trusting in the Lord; and this trust is what causes us to dwell safely in the land, with sufficient for our needs.

The land that God has promised for our inheritance is the new earth; but this is no bar to a present application of the promise; for the greater includes the less, and it is a light thing for God, who gives eternal riches and

salvation; to keep us in safety and supply our wants for the little time we have here.

All Wants Supplied

Tuesday, July 26

"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)

This is self-evident. Whosoever can say from the heart: "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you," (Psalm 73:25) is sure to have every want satisfied; for God is the portion of His people. What a blessed condition, to have no want that is not supplied! Such a person is richer than any millionaire.

God is Our Plan Maker

Wednesday, July 27

"Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5) "It is not in man that walks to direct His steps;" (Jeremiah 10:23)

But "It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect." (Psalm 18:32)

If we commit our way to the Lord, it may not, and most likely will not, come out as we would have made it if we could; but it will be the right way, and we shall say that it is just as we would have it.

If we commit our way unto the Lord, we must leave it wholly with Him, and not prescribe to Him how He shall order it.

Light from Darkness

Thursday, July 28

"He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." (Psalm 37:6)

It makes no difference if the blackness of sin has blotted out all our righteousness; even then if we trust in God He will make our righteousness appear, even covering us with it, because it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shines in our hearts.

Nothing hinders the Lord; out of the most faulty material He can produce a perfect structure.

Worry is Evil

Friday, July 29

"Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil." (Psalm 37:8)

This is how we usually read it; but we shall understand it better if we read it thus, as in the Revision: "Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil."

If we fret and worry, it is only to do evil. Fretting is to take our cause out of God's hands, and the end can only be evil. "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

Earth Given to the Poor

Sabbath, July 30

"The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11)

This is the same as Matthew 5:5; but we miss much of the blessedness of the promise by not grasping fully the force of the word "meek." "He has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." (Isaiah 61:1)

Compare the above with Christ's quotation of it: "He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." (Luke 4:16)

By comparing these, we see that the promise of the earth is to those who have nothing. God has chosen "the poor of this world, rich in faith," to be heirs of the kingdom. (James 2:5) Such persons are only seemingly poor.

God Defends the Just

Sunday, July 31

"The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon Him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming." (Psalm 37:12-13)

This text furnishes the clearest proof that whoever plots against any of God's people is plotting against God himself. God laughs at the plotter and at his rage, not because He is indifferent, but because He knows that it is all senseless.

The wicked think that they have only defenseless mortals to fight against, when the attack is on the everlasting God. It is a vain thing that they imagine; for even while they take counsel together against the just, the Lord declares the decree: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm 2:6)

That "whosoever will" may apply to himself all the promises of Psalm 2:6-9, is evident from: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, July 1904--Psalm 37:1-13.

Chapter 85

Psalm 37: How to Be Free from Want

Who would not be glad if he could be assured that he could have everything he wanted? How many people there are who are filled with unsatisfied longings! This is a world of want and woe.

It is not only those who have no money who are in want. Often those who suffer the most from unsatisfied desires are those whose money is reckoned by millions. They want more.

Well, there is a sure way by which every man may have all that he wants,--may have every desire gratified. Here it is: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:3-4)

It is a sure thing. Whoever delights in the Lord will have everything he wants. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly [or sincerely]." (Psalm 84:11)

And those who delight in the Lord will want nothing but that which is good. Christ himself is the surety for the fulfillment of this promise. He says: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7)

He has an unlimited supply, for the apostle assures us, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

His riches are unsearchable. Why will men persist in being in want, when they might have abundance?--Present Truth, October 20, 1892--Psalm 37:3-4.

Chapter 86

Psalm 37: Righteousness as Light

"He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." (Psalm 37:6)

It makes no difference if the blackness of sin has blotted out all our righteousness; even then if we trust in God He will make our righteousness appear, even covering us with it, because it is God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shines in our hearts.

Nothing hinders the Lord; out of the most faulty material He can produce a perfect structure.--Present Truth, September 15, 1904--Psalm 37:6.

Chapter 87

Psalm 37: Well-Ordered Steps

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." (Psalm 37:23)

Let no one say in discouragement, "Then the Lord will not order my steps, because I am not good."

Remember that the good man's steps are not ordered by the Lord because the man is good, but that the man is good because the Lord directs his steps. "What man is he that fears the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose." (Psalm 25:12) "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know the doctrine." (John 7:17) "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." (John 6:29) "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

The good man is the man who is constantly willing that God should use him in His own way. Such a man's steps are ordered by the Lord.

There is no use in making difficult what God has made easy. When the Bible says that the good man's steps are ordered by the Lord, it is folly to try to find some fanciful interpretation of the words. They mean just what they say.

When even the hairs of our head are all numbered, why should it be thought a thing incredible that God literally directs the steps of those who commit their ways to Him. There are no accidents in the life of such ones. Their feet do not wander aimlessly.

How many times a man has moved a few steps, seemingly without any purpose, and certainly without knowing why, just in time to escape some terrible calamity. What confidence it gives to know that we are constantly guided by Him who knows the way that we take.

But there is a still further promise to the good man whose steps are ordered by the Lord: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand." (Psalm 37:24)

He can say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemies; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah 7:8)

There is no depth to which men may fall, where the Lord does not hold out hope to him. "These things I write unto you, that you sin not, but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1)--Present Truth, December 26, 1895--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 37:23.

Chapter 88

Psalm 37: Falling to Rise Again

Although in our struggle against sin we have God himself with all His armor to help us, it sometimes happens that through vain self-confidence or failure to take heed to our ways we get a fall. What then? Shall we lie still and mourn over our defeat? Not by any means. "A man's goings are established of the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand." (Psalm 37:23-24)

So we should always say, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah 7:8)

This boldness, this quietness and confidence, will be our strength, our victory. "[Christ] is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." (Luke 2:34)--Present Truth, January 8, 1903--Psalm 37:23-24.

Chapter 89

Psalm 40: Our Song

"The Lord is my strength and song." (Exodus 15:2)

Why then should it be thought that there is anything about the service of God that is dismal and sad? It is a service of song. The psalmist says, "He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." (Psalm 40:3)

We are called to "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Is there anything sad about coming out from darkness into the bright light? This is what the service of God is,--standing in the light where His glory can be seen upon us, and rejoicing in it. "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you." (Isaiah 60:2)

And if we stand there, that song will be in our mouth, and not words of discouragement and lamentation; "He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psalm 40:3) and then, "many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:3)--Present Truth, December 28, 1893--Psalm 40:3.

Chapter 90

Psalm 40: A Very Present Help

Many times in the Psalms we find this prayer repeated, "O Lord, make haste to help me." (Psalm 40:13; Psalm 38:22; Psalm 70:1)

It is a prayer inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore is equal to a statement of what God will surely do. Let this then be a comforting assurance to those who say that Satan springs temptations on them unawares, and they fall into sin before they think. God is certainly quicker, as He is more powerful than Satan, and: "[He is] not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27)

It is by the word of His lips that we keep ourselves from the paths of the destroyer,122 and, "His word runs very swiftly." (Psalm 147:15)

Thus: "[He] is able to keep you from falling." (Jude 1:24)--Present Truth, September 12, 1901--Psalm 40:13.

Chapter 91

Psalm 40: Supplying Need

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me." (Psalm 40:17)

And He thinks upon the needy, for the purpose of supplying their need; for we are assured, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

But whom will He help? Why, those who need help, of course. This was shown by Jesus when the people followed Him. "He received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." (Luke 9:11)

It is our need that recommends us to the loving care of the Lord, and our willingness to receive that, measures the amount bestowed upon us.--Present Truth, May 31, 1894--Psalm 40:17.

Chapter 92

Psalm 43: The Light That Leads to God's Sanctuary

The children of Israel were led in the desert by a cloud from which the light shone forth in the darkness of night. Thus they were taught that they were being delivered, guided, and protected by the power that in the beginning caused the light to shine out of darkness. "Oh, send out your light and your truth, let them lead me; let them bring me unto your holy hill, and to your tabernacles." (Psalm 43:3)

It was to this place that God was leading Israel, for Moses, after crossing the Red Sea, sang: "You shall bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance; in the place, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in; in your sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." (Exodus 15:17)--Present Truth, November 6, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 43:3.

Chapter 93

Psalm 46: A Present Help

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

How much help and consolation we miss by unconsciously omitting the word "present" when reading the above text. We readily admit that God is a "refuge and strength" to others, and we may even go so far sometimes as to say that He is "our refuge and strength." That is, we believe He has helped us, and that He will help us, if we trust Him. But is it not quite another thing to believe that He is "a present help" in this trouble,--and not only a present help, but a "very present help"?

How natural it is to look back on that long illness or that severe trial in the past and gratefully acknowledge God's care and help through it all, and yet at the same time fear to trust Him in the present emergency! It is so much easier to believe that He has heard us, and that He will hear us, then that He does hear us.

We assent to the fact of a crucified and risen Saviour, and yet how feebly we laid hold upon it! How often we act as though we believed there was no one to pity and no one to save, as though our Saviour were yet buried in Joseph's new tomb! But praise God, He is risen! (Matthew 28:6)

"The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them." (Psalm 145:18-19)

A remarkable instance of the fulfillment of this promise is noted in the New York Observer of December 29, 1892. It is in connection with the story of the wrecking of the Spree, the Atlantic steamer on which Mr. D. L. Moody recently took passage for America. He says: "I embarked on the Spree, a vessel about four hundred and ninety feet long, with seven hundred

passengers on board representing Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Russia, Hungary and other countries, besides our own.

When about three days on our voyage, as I was lying on my couch I was startled by a terrible crash and shock, as if the vessel had been driven on a rock. I did not at first feel much anxiety--perhaps I was too ill to think much about it. But my son jumped from his berth and rushed on deck. He was back again in a few moments, explaining that the shaft was broken and the vessel sinking. I did not at first believe it could be so bad, but concluded to dress and go on deck. The report was only too true. The captain told the affrighted passengers, who had rushed on deck that there was no danger, and some of the second cabin passengers returned to their berths, only to be driven out again by the inrushing water, leaving everything behind them.

The officers and crew did all they could to save the vessel. But it was soon found that the pumps were useless, for the water poured into the ship too rapidly to be controlled. There was nothing more in the power of man to do. We were utterly, absolutely helpless. We could only stand still on the poor, drifting, sinking ship, and look into our watery graves.

All this time, unknown to the passengers, the officers were making preparations for the last resort. The life-boats were all put in readiness, provisions prepared, life-preservers in hand, the officers armed with revolvers to enforce their orders, and the question was evidently being debated in their minds whether to launch the boats at once, or wait. The sea was so heavy that the boats could hardly have lived in it. Two of the passengers had loaded revolvers ready to blow out their brains if the vessel should go down, preferring death by bullets to death by drowning.

At noon the captain told us he thought he had the water under control, and was in hopes of drifting in the way of some passing vessel. The ships bow was now high in the air, while the stern seemed to settle more and more. The sea was very rough, and the ship rolled from side to side with fearful lurches. If she had pitched violently but once, though bulkheads must have burst, and the end come. The captain tried to keep up hope by telling us we

should probably drift in the way of a ship by three o'clock that Saturday afternoon, but the night closed upon us without sign of a sail.

That was an awful night, the darkest in all our lives. Seven hundred men, women, and children waiting for the doom that was settling upon us. No one dared to sleep. We were all together in the saloon of the first cabin--Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and skeptics--although I doubt if at that time there were any skeptics among us. The agony and suspense were too great for words. With blanched faces and trembling hearts the passengers looked at each other, as if trying to read what no one dared to speak. Rockets flamed into the sky, but there was no answer. We were drifting out of the track of the great steamers. Every hour seemed to increase the danger of our situation.

Sunday morning dawned, without help or hope. Up to that time no suggestion of religious services had been made. To have done that would almost certainly have produced a panic. In the awful suspense and dread that prevailed, a word about religion would have suggested the most terrible things to the poor souls. It was necessary to divert their minds, if possible, or they would break under the strain.

But as that second night came on, we held a prayer-meeting, with the concurrence of the captain. Everybody attended, and I think everybody prayed, skeptics and all. Surely the cries of the dear little children were heard in heaven. With one arm clasping a pillar to steady myself on the reeling vessel, I tried to read the 91st Psalm, and we prayed that God would still the raging of the sea and bring us to our desired heaven. It was a new psalm to me from that very hour. The eleventh verse touched me very deeply. It was like a voice of Divine assurance, and it seemed a very real thing, as I read: "He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways." Surely He did it. I read also from the 107th Psalm, versus 20-31. One lady thought those words must have been written for the occasion, and afterwards asked to see the book for herself.

I was passing through a new experience. I had thought myself superior to the fear of death. I have often preached on the subject and urged Christians

to realize this victory of faith. During our civil war I had been under fire without fear. I was in Chicago during the great cholera epidemic and went around with the doctors, visiting the sick and dying. Where they could go to look after the bodies of men, I said I could go to look after their souls. I remember a case of small-pox where the flesh had literally dropped away from the backbone, yet I went to the bedside of that poor sufferer again and again with Bible and prayer for Jesus' sake. In all this I had no fear of death.

But on the sinking ship it was different. There was no cloud between my soul and my Saviour. I know my sins had been put away. That was all settled long ago. But as my thoughts went out to my loved ones at home--my wife and children, anxiously waiting for my coming--my friends on both sides of the sea--the schools and all the interests so dear to me--and realized that perhaps the next hour would separate me for ever from all these, so far as this world was concerned, I confess it almost broke me down. It was the darkest hour of my life!

I could not endure it. I must have relief, and relief came in prayer. God heard my cry and enabled me to say from the depths of my soul, "Your will be done." It was all settled. Sweet peace came to my heart. I went to bed and almost immediately fell asleep, and never slept more soundly in all my life. Out of the depths I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. I can no more doubt that God gave answer to my prayer for relief, then I can doubt my own existence.

About three o'clock at night I was aroused from my sound sleep by the voice of my son. "Come on deck, father," he said. I followed him, and he pointed toward a far-off light, rising and sinking on the sea. It was a messenger of deliverance to us. It proved to be the light of the steamer Lake Huron, whose lookout had seen our flaming signals of distress, and supposed it was a vessel in flames. Oh, the joy of that moment when those seven hundred despairing passengers beheld the approaching ship! Who can ever forget it?

But now the question is, can this small steamer tow the helpless Spree on a thousand miles to Queenstown? Every movement was watched with

intensest anxiety and prayer. It was a brave and perilous undertaking. The two vessels were at last connected by two great cables. If a storm arose these would snap like a thread, and we must be left to our fate. But I had no fear. God would finish the work He had begun. The waves were calmed--the cables held--the steamer moved in the wake of the Huron. There were storms all around us, but they came not near our broken ship.

Seven days after the accident, by the good hand of our God upon us, we were able to hold a joyous thanksgiving service in the harbor of Queenstown--just one week ago today, as I stand here among the friends and neighbors I love so well. The rescuing ship that God sent to us in our distress, had just sufficient power to tow our vessel, and just enough coal to take her into port! There was nothing to spare! Less would have been insufficient. Her captain also is a man of prayer, and besought God's help to enable them to accomplish their dangerous and difficult task. God answered the united prayers of the distressed voyagers and brought them to their desired haven."

Shall we not learn a lesson from those ship-wrecked passengers? Is not our need of a life-boat as great as theirs? If we but realized that need as vividly as they did, and cry as earnestly for help, would we not experience more such deliverances, and join in more such thanksgivings?

Again, it is well to remember to give thanks to God for deliverance from peril; but it is better still to recognize His hand at all times. His care is over us no less in keeping us from accidents than it is in saving our lives when accidents occur.

Two preachers once met at a church, and one said that he had very much to thank God for, because although his carriage had been thrown down an embankment as he was coming, he had escaped injury; it was a miraculous deliverance. Said the other, "My brother I have more to be thankful for than you, because I came over the same road and no accident whatever happened to me or my carriage."

It is the direct personal care of God that keeps us at all times. But for His mercies we should be cut off. So instead of waiting until some great affair takes place, and we experience a remarkable deliverance from danger, let us thank the Lord that His presence keeps us from the presence of danger.--Present Truth, January 26, 1893--Psalm 46:1.

Chapter 94

Psalm 46: When Will Help Come?

In Psalm 46:5, with the more accurate rendering indicated in the margin, we read,

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, when the morning appears." (Psalm 46:5)

One person reading this asked, "When will the morning come, so that she--the daughter of Zion--may expect help?"

The answer to the question is near at hand. The morning comes when the Daystar arises in the heart; when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings. And when is that? Now; for, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)

And, "He is not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27)

The call is, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you." (Ephesians 5:14)

Even now, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for," (Romans 13:11) "The darkness is past, and the true Light now shines." (1 John 2:8)

How long must we wait after we call upon God for help, before the help will come? Not any time at all; for: "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 45:1)

Since He is our dwelling-place in all generations, we certainly need not go far, nor wait long, for help. "Shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:7-8)

You say that it is the city of God that is spoken of in Psalm 46, which shall not be moved, but shall be helped early, because: "God is in the midst of her." (Psalm 46:5)

Very well; but what is a city without people? God is in the midst of Zion, because He is in the midst of His people, who are His temple. Therefore, "Cry out, and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the HolyOne of Israel in the midst of you." (Isaiah 12:6)--Present Truth, April 4, 1901--Psalm 46:5.

Chapter 95

Psalm 49: Where Money Is of No Value

The millionaire steel maker, John Henry, was recently the victim of a railway accident, and, according to the Springfield Republican (USA), as he lay, crushed and torn, at the little railway station near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he said, "I will give $100,000 to anyone who will save my life." It was a vain offer. As the Republican says, "He might have offered his entire fortune with the same result; the most skillful surgical attention could not save him." How forcibly this impresses the words of: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give toGod a ransom for him." (Psalm 49:6-7)

Most assuredly not, when all their wealth cannot save their own lives. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivers from death." (Proverbs 11:4)--Present Truth, September 18, 1902--Psalm 49:6-7.

Chapter 96

Psalm 50: Concerning Prayer

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Psalm 50:15)

Thus says the Lord; and what He says in this place is repeated many times in the Scriptures. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7:7)

Immediately following this statement, we find a striking illustration of God's willingness, nay, His anxiety, to answer prayer. "What man is there of you, when if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" (Matthew 7:9-10)

There can be but one answer; no real father would deal so heartlessly with his child. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11)

This is something that parents especially can appreciate. Whenever anyone who is a parent feels despondent, and thinks that God does not care for him, let him ask himself, "Why should I think myself better than God? I would not think of refusing my children any good thing that lay in my power to bestow; but I am selfish even at the best, and even my best wishes for my children are limited by my lack of resources; God, on the contrary, is infinite love and compassion, and has power to perform whatever His love prompts; therefore as surely as I live I know that God does hear my prayers."

Think further of the illustration here given. The parent is not only willing to supply the child's needs, but provides for them beforehand. The child never thinks of food until it is hungry. Suppose now that the parents likewise had not thought about providing food, until the child's request brought it to their attention; then the child would be obliged to wait, and would suffer hunger.

But such is never the case. Long before the child thought of eating, the parents were at work providing something against the time of need. This is the work of parents, to look ahead, and provide for their children's wants.

Even so it is with God. He knows what we need, so that, as the child to the parent, we come to Him, not to let Him know that we are in need, but to take what He has before prepared for us. Our asking is not to make Him willing to give, but to show our willingness to receive.

God wishes that we should be saved from sin, that we should receive eternal life; and, as the greater includes the less, He also wishes that we should have all things necessary for this life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

In His Word God has made known His will. The commandments show that it is God's will that we should live righteously, that we should love Him supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves.

But how can we attain to all this? The question is easily answered. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5:14-15)

We cannot begin or continue our own lives, either in this world or the world to come; but God can, and it is His pleasure to do so; if therefore we are willing to accept God's good gifts, then we may know without any shadow of doubt, that we have them whenever we ask for them; and if we "Pray without ceasing," (1 Thessalonians 5:17) then we are always in possession of every good gift. "Well, isn't it tiresome continually to be asking for what we need?"

That depends on whom we ask. The parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8) was given to teach us that: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18:1)

The judge feared not God, neither regarded man, and so when a widow asked redress for her wrongs he paid no attention to her for a while. But afterwards he thought that his ease might be disturbed much more by her repeated requests than by complying with them, and so he granted them.

If we read no further, we should not be encouraged to pray always and not to faint; for even if we did not become discouraged after a few unheeded petitions, and give up without receiving the thing desired, we would at least say, "I will not ask any oftener than I am absolutely obliged to."

But God is "faithful and just," (1 John 1:9) not unjust; He cares for us, (1 Peter 5:7) and desires our welfare far more than we do. What then? "And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily." (Luke 18:7-8,RV)

The parable is a contrast. If the unjust judge, who had no regard whatever for men, would grant a request simply that he might not be further disturbed, how much more will God grant the request of His chosen ones, with whose failings He is so long-suffering. He will not keep them waiting; nay, "He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8,RV)

In spite of the fact that everything, not only in the Bible, but in God's open book of nature, speaks of God's readiness and parental anxiety to give good gifts, it is a rare thing to find people with faith enough to continue asking and receiving. "But why continue to ask, if God is so ready to give?" unbelief asks. "What means that statement that God's elect cry day and night to Him, if He is so willing to give?"

How ready and seemingly anxious people are to make God out unfeeling, and the way of life hard! God's people cry day and night to Him, for the very

reason that He answers them so speedily, not even waiting till they have done speaking. "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:1-2)

Because He inclines His ear to us, bending over toward us, so as not to miss the faintest whisper, and even anticipates our words, because He reads the heart's desire, and knows what we would ask for far better than we know how to express it, we are encouraged to keep calling on Him continually. This is why we can always pray and not faint: God does not weary us by keeping us waiting.

But when we go no further in the consideration of prayer than to agree that God answers prayer, although that is a good thing to know, it is far from a true realization of what prayer really is. We speak now, of course, of sincere prayer. We speak about God's hearing us, when the question really turns on whether or not we hear God.

In our ordinary thought and talk about prayer, we seem to have the idea that we speak first, and that our part is to call God's attention to us. That is a step in the direction of the heathen idea, that they must awaken their god, so that he may be conscious of their presence.

It is this idea, more or less fully developed, which holds many people back from God. They fear to approach Him; they fear that they will be intruding on His time and patience, and they have no courage to ask an audience with Him, regarding Him much as they would an earthly autocrat, only infinitely greater and therefore proportionally unapproachable.

If it were indeed the case that we must approach the throne alone, and ask to gain an audience with God on our own account,--if we had to take the initiative--then it would indeed be presumptuous for us to think of it, and we might well shrink from the trial.

But the fact is, God has spoken first; He has called us to Him, and therefore instead of its being presumption for us to approach and speak to

Him, it is rudeness in the highest degree if we turn away and say nothing. Common civility demands that we reply to a fellow-man when he speaks to us; how much more should we give heed and reply when God speaks to us.

God speaks to us, and offers us forgiveness, righteousness, everlasting riches. When we come to Him in prayer, it is only because He has called us to Him; it is only to take what He has already said He freely gives us. The question is not, therefore, whether God will hear us, but whether we will hear God; and true prayer consists more in listening than in talking.

Therefore it is that Christ tells us not to use vain repetitions, or an overflow of words, as the heathen who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking; "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. For your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:7-8)

God has called us to Him to receive rich gifts, and He says: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

But since it is a fact that God has spoken first, that He has made known His will to us, and that true prayer is our response to His offer, with thanksgiving for what He has given, it necessarily follows that a study of God's will as revealed in His Word is necessary to prayer. He who is best acquainted with God's will, can pray best.

But what if we should ask too much? Is there not danger of presuming on God's generosity, overtaxing it? No fear whatsoever. He is able, and therefore willing, "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

And when we hear His voice, that offers us so many good things, and come to Him, and receive them at His hands, what shall we give in return? That is just what the Psalmist asked, after God's readiness to hear had made him determined to call upon the Lord as long as he lived. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12)

That is a most natural question, and the inspired answer immediately follows: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." (Psalm 116:13)

How shall I pay the Lord for what He has given me? By taking more. That is the only way. "But then I will owe Him more than before!"

Certainly, and so are you under obligation to take more than before; and as you are in duty bound to pay your debt by taking twice as much as before, so you make your debt four times as large, and in order to pay it you must now take eight times as much as before, and so on in endless progression. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33) "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)--Present Truth, June 17, 1897--Psalm 50:15.

Chapter 97

Psalm 50: Glorifying God

Wonderful as it may seem, it lies in the power of feeble, finite man, to glorify God. He who is the King of kings, dwelling in light whereunto no man can approach, and before whom angels vail their eyes, can receive an augmentation of glory from mortal man!

We do not know how this can be, but God himself tells us that it is true: "Whoso offers praise glorifies me." (Psalm 50:23)

All things were created for the glory of God. Revelation 4:11. Yet God is not arbitrary, but has made the glory of the Creator the highest happiness of those created. The apostle Peter tells us, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Though man is fallen, he has not lost the privilege of serving the original purpose of his creation. In one thing he can yet stand with the sinless throng in worlds above; he can do that which will glorify God; he can join in the great anthem of praise which myriad tongues, from realms beyond our sight, send forth to the great Creator.

And God is glorified by the praise of our feeble tongues just as much as by the anthems of seraphim and cherubim; for it is not the might or the grandeur or the eloquence of the tribute that glorifies Him, but that which tells most of the power of Divine love.

And man, to whom that love has been most revealed, is perhaps the best fitted of all to testify of that grace which is sufficient for all needs, and that power which is made perfect in weakness.--Present Truth, October 19, 1893--Psalm 50:23.

Chapter 98

Psalm 50: Praise

"Whoso offers praise glorifies me, and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23)

Look in the margin of the Revised Version, and you will find this as the exact rendering of the Lord. That praise does reveal the salvation of God, is shown by the fact that God is our salvation, and that He dwells in the praises of His people. (Psalm 22:3)

Praise is the way of salvation. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise, because of your enemies, that You might still the enemy and the avenger." (Matthew 21:16; Psalm 8:3)

Praise, therefore, is the weapon with which the weakest soul can silence and put to flight the adversary.

The only thing that anybody needs to do in order to be saved is to praise the Lord, and to keep on praising Him. Some one will say, "What about confessing our sins, and believing unto righteousness?"

That is a part of praise. To confess our sins is to praise God's word of truth by agreeing with Him; and it is by the shining forth of our good works that men are led to glorify God. Our acceptance in the Beloved is "To the praise of the glory of His grace." (Ephesians 1:6)

But it is true of simple thanksgiving, that it is all that is necessary for salvation. Man who once knew God became heathen solely because: "They glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful." (Romans 1:21)

Let us see how it is that praise and thanksgiving open the way for God's salvation. It is very simple, Thanksgiving is an acknowledgment of favors received. It is the recognition that something has been done by another. It is plain, therefore, that if we "In every thing give thanks," (1 Thessalonians

5:18) we shall be continually recognizing and acknowledging God as the Maker and Upholder of all things--the Giver of every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17)

Now it is plain that nobody can continually recognize God in everything, and at the same time treat Him with indifference. For instance, nobody who appreciates the fact that every breath is the direct gift of God, can over use breath in blasphemy; and all who acknowledge that their life comes from Him and belongs to Him, must yield themselves wholly to Him, that He may do His own will in them. Thus to live in a state of constant thanksgiving is to share God's salvation.

But can one continually thank God for life and its common blessings? Why not? "[His] mercies ... are new every morning;" (Lamentations 3:22-23) and when we receive them as coming from Him we shall not regard them as "common," of trifling importance. In common politeness we thank a friend for favors done us, no matter how often they are repeated; and why should we not be as courteous to God? Whoever will recognize the simple truth of his own existence, is sure to be saved. Nothing more is required. Therefore: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6)

So, "Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)--Present Truth, June 6, 1901--Psalm 50:23.

Chapter 99

Psalm 51: Sacrifice

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

A broken and contrite heart is one that is broken in pieces and ground up. Not of much worth, is it? What is it good for? Nothing.

And that is why it appropriates Christ, who is of infinite worth, a sacrifice that is always acceptable to God; having nothing in itself, but trusting wholly in Christ.

He is the surety of the new covenant, and so when He comes He will say, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:5)--Present Truth, June 10, 1897--Psalm 51:17.

Chapter 100

Psalm 55: Simplicity of Faith

There is nothing in the world more simple than faith. Faith is dependence upon God-resting upon His word; and it is easier and simpler to depend upon God than upon self, because it is easier to let someone care for us than to take care of ourselves.

It is easier to rest upon something than to hold ourselves up. We have neither the strength nor wisdom to take care of ourselves, and when we attempt to do so the result is much worry and useless expenditure of effort, with failure at the end.

But God has invited us to let Him take care of us. His word says: "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." (Psalm 55:22)

And this burden includes "all your care." (1 Peter 5:7) And your care includes yourself.

Faith is the simplest means of knowledge. It is easier to learn a thing by being told by someone who knows, than to discover it by our own investigations. And we cannot know the truths which God tells us except by taking His word, for they lie altogether beyond the range of our human powers.

Through faith we understand these things although we cannot grasp them by any process of reason or experiment. And we know they are so, for faith is not blind, but sees them. We cannot reason out all the knowledge that we have, or that one mind can receive from another.

A look of the eye, a touch of the hand, can convey knowledge from heart to heart without reason being called into action,--knowledge which we would not trust reason to give us. Is it strange then that the Spirit of God can reveal to us deep mysteries by its action upon our hearts, by the simple means of faith?

But faith does not lead to idleness and supine indifference; quite the contrary. For while this would be the result of allowing one like ourselves to care for us in all things and tell us what we need to know, faith puts God within us, there to will and to work His pleasure; thus making our activity greater and wiser than when we moved in our own strength and wisdom.

Nor does it make us machines; for when our own wills cease to cooperate with God, He at once ceases to work in us.--Present Truth, September 13, 1894--Psalm 55:22.

Chapter 101

Psalm 55: The Burden Bearer

Is it hard work to lay down a heavy burden? No one will say that it is. Yet it is as hard to do that as to become a Christian; for a Christian is simply one who has yielded to the Lord--one who has laid upon Him the burden he was carrying.

The Lord invites all to cast their burdens upon Him. "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." (Psalm 55:22)

Your burden is yourself. Before a person knows the Lord, he tries to sustain himself; he tries to hold himself up, as if he were self-existent and capable of maintaining his existence successfully against all the opposing forces around him. He tries to lift himself by himself, and, strangely enough, he imagines at times that he is succeeding. The plane of spiritual truth is, to the natural eye, full of optical illusions.

The effort to do this imposes a heavy burden of care, anxiety, disappointment, and conscious guilt. It is too heavy for anyone but the Lord to carry. The Lord knows this, and so invites all persons to give up their burdens to Him. He has made himself the burden-bearer.

Yet such is the perverting and blinding power of sin upon the natural mind that it seems a great deal harder to lay the burden down than to carry it! So men refuse to accept the Lord's invitation and give Him their burdens, as being too hard a thing for them to do! "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you." (Psalm 55:22)

Cast yourself upon Him, and you become a Christian, for thereby you show that you believe and trust Him. There is rest and happiness for all who will do this. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." (Psalm 32:11)--Present Truth, April 4, 1895--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 55:22.

Chapter 102

Psalm 63: Practical Thoughts

"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see your power and your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary." (Psalm 63:1-2)

David had correct ideas of his relation to God. He says, "You are my God." Too many imagine that God is far off from them, and that they have to make some great exertions to arouse his interest in them. They forget that God is "not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:27-28)

They forget that God has sought us, and is anxiously waiting for us to seek Him. They imagine that God is like a man,--holding off those who have done Him a wrong, and refusing to be reconciled. They forget that: "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8) and that: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," (2 Corinthians 5:19) and that to his ministers he has committed the word of reconciliation, who in Christ's stead beg of sinners, "Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Many people remain at a distance from God, because they forget, or have never heard, that He has proclaimed himself as: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7) "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Psalm 103:8) "[He is] long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

So willing is He to forgive, that when men seek Him, turning from their wicked thoughts and actions, "He will multiply to pardon." (Isaiah 55:7,margin)

And so abundant and efficient is His mercy toward them that fear him, that though their sins be as scarlet, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

Why will not men let the goodness of God lead them to repentance? What more could He have done than He has done?

vs. 1: Early will I seek you.

David knew that this was the time to seek the Lord. "Those that seek me early shall find me." (Proverbs 8:17)

Is not this an indication that, if seeking the Lord is put off, He might not be found? Isaiah says: "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (Isaiah 55:6)

Then there will be a time when he may not be found. "Now is the accepted time." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

True, this refers to the gospel age, but it is literally true. We have known men, in this age when the gospel is preached, who could not find the Lord. They had once felt the strivings of the Spirit, but now they could feel no interest in divine things. They would acknowledge the truth of God's word, but they were indifferent to it.

Now is the time when the Lord may be found,--just now while you feel that the husks of sin, "the beggarly elements of the world," are unsatisfying food. Do not stifle the slightest conviction: "Quench not the Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 5:19)

Says Jesus: "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

But it is not sufficient to simply seek early; some start to seek the Lord, but have not a desire sufficiently strong to make them persevere. Said David:

vs. 1: My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You.

He felt that he must have God. He could not be satisfied without God. When a man feels that way, he gets what he wants. Says Christ: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

The trouble too often is, that instead of having an intense desire and longing for righteousness, we are simply passively willing to have righteousness. We ask the Lord to help us overcome some sin, with a mental reservation that we may indulge in it once in a while. We don't like to say, "I hate the sins that made you mourn."--William Cowper, Hymn: O For A Closer Walk With God, 1772.

"Hate" seems too strong a word; we still cherish a secret love for the sin. We want (so we think) to be righteous, and yet we feel loath to part with that darling sin. That is very far from hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Such half-way desire will never result in anything except final defeat. But when the mind is fixed upon Christ; when He is to the soul "the chiefest among ten thousand, ... [The One] altogether lovely;" (Song 5:10,16) when to be like Him is the one absorbing desire;--then will He be found. To such the promise is: "They shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

Think of that. How much righteousness does that imply? Here is the definition of "fill":

To make full; to supply with as much as can be held or contained; to put or pour into till no more can be received; to occupy to the whole capacity of.

Now that doesn't leave any room for anything else. When a man is "filled with the fruits of righteousness," (Philippians 1:11) there isn't going to be any wickedness cropping out. Such a one "keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." (1 John 5:18)

But is such a condition possible? Let us see. Paul told the Ephesians that he prayed to God, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded

in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is 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 fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-19)

Do you know anyone who has realized the answer to that prayer? Such a thing must be possible, for Paul prayed for it, and he says that God is able "to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

Ah that's the secret. There is some power working in us that a stronger than we, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts." Well, Christ was unsullied by the strongest of Satan's temptations, and if He dwells in our hearts, why may not we likewise repel all of Satan's advances? Says Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

No man has the strength to resist the devil, but with Christ to strengthen him he can do all things. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

Not the victory that makes a feeble effort to overcome, and fails; but the victory that does overcome. What has been done may be done. Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:6) "Enoch walked with God;" (Genesis 5:24) and two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Moreover we have the Lord's own testimony concerning Job that he was: "a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil." (Job 1:8)

It is true that there was "none like him in the earth;" (Job 1:8) but the fact that there was one such man shows that there might have been more; and if there might have been more there ought to have been more. Let it be remembered, however, that this is not a gift suddenly bestowed, but is a constant work. Says David:

vs. 8: My soul follows hard after You.

It is not enough simply to seek the Lord early, or even to hunger and thirst after him, unless it is kept up. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed God might be careful to maintain good works." (Titus 3:8)

Such a state of righteousness is progressive. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be blameless till the day of Christ." (Philippians 1:9-10) "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18)

The Christian can never arrive at a place beyond which there is nothing. Stereotyping is a thing that is gone in Christian experience. As a matter of course, walking with God produces humility. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not up right in him." (Habakkuk 2:4)

When a man becomes satisfied with his condition, he ceases to hunger and thirst after righteousness; he ceases to follow hard after God, and consequently he becomes empty. Notwithstanding Job's perfectness, when God revealed himself to him in an especial manner, he said: "I have heard of You with the hearing of the ear; but now my eyesees You. Wherefore I abhor myself." (Job 42:5-6)

The nearer one gets to God, the greater will seem the contrast between God and himself. If it were not so, there would come a time when he would cease to say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," (Revelation 5:12) and would ascribe worthiness to himself. That time can never come.

vs. 2: To see your power and your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.

That is what David longed for. He had been at times wonderfully impressed, during the services in the sanctuary, with the power of the love of

God. He had been greatly blessed. Now he wants to see the Lord just as he had seen Him in the sanctuary. He believed that a person might enjoy just as much of the blessing of God while about his daily business as when the in church.

How was it with Daniel? He was prime minister of the kingdom of Babylon, with all the burden of the business of that mighty empire upon him, yet while he was in the palace, doing "the king's business," he received a vision from God. (See Daniel 8:1,2,27) He did not allow business care to separate him from God. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

For what purpose was it told what Daniel was doing when he had that vision, except that we might learn that it is possible to "walk with God," and to have close communion with Him, even when burdened with business cares. Daniel had learned to cast his care on the Lord. When a man has learned that, he can say,

vs. 3: Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You.

He can't help praising the Lord.

vs. 4: Thus will I bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in your name.

Yes; "they will be still praising You." (Psalm 84:4)

vs. 5: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips;

vs. 6: When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.

vs. 7: Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.

Continual remembrance of God must result in praise and thanksgiving; and praise to God is a powerful help in overcoming. Says David: "So will I sing praise unto your name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows." (Psalm 61:8)

Meditation upon God reveals His goodness, and this calls for praise; praise is but an expression of confidence in God, "and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)--Signs of the Times, July 1, 1886--Original title: Practical Thoughts on Psalm 63--Psalm 63:1-8.

Chapter 103

Psalm 63: Moments

vs. 1: O God, You are my God...

The man who can say that from the heart, has the victory.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Our discouragements and defeats come when we forget God, or when, if we remember Him, we forget that He is our God.

vs. 1: My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. "[God is] the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

The water which proceeds from His throne is the water of life, for: "With You is the fountain of life. His promise is:" (Psalm 36:9) "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." (Isaiah 44:3) "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." (Isaiah 41:17-18)

This He literally did once, (See Exodus 17:1-6; Psalm 105:41) and will again as literally do the same thing. But all this is to teach us how easily He can satisfy with righteousness the soul that thirsts for it.

vs. 2: To see your power and your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.

Some people think that it is only in the place of meeting that they can see the Lord. That is a mistake. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; but the soul who does not see the glory and power of God, except when he is in meeting, will have a hard life. God's eternal power

is manifested in the things that He has made, and "the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3)

Therefore not only in the house of prayer, but everywhere, may the earnestly-seeking soul feast his eyes upon the glory of God, and be changed by it into the Divine image.

vs. 3: Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You?

Such language could come only from one who could say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." (Psalm 73:25) "In His favor is life." (Psalm 30:5) "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Because His kindness is everlasting, (Isaiah 54:8) we may well say, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 89:1)

vs. 5: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips;

vs. 6: When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.

And why? Because Christ who is the Word of God, and the life of the written word, in whom is all the fullness of God, is the Bread of God. He who rightly meditates in the word, feeds upon Christ, whose flesh is true food. "The flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63)

If bread could become the actual flesh of the Son of God, it would be of no value; but His words are Spirit and life. So the prophet says: "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jeremiah 15:16)

As cold water and good food cause a famished person to revive, and produce a feeling of joy and satisfaction; so the words of God, when one feeds upon them, must produce praise and thanksgiving. Those who have no words of praise, are the ones who do not feed upon the word.

Let those who refuse to sing,
Who never knew our God;
But children of the Heavenly King
Must speak their joys abroad.

vs. 7: Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of your wings will I rejoice.

"For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." (Isaiah 25:4) "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ... He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust." (Psalm 91:1,4)

That is a place of safety where one may rejoice when trouble is raging. What tenderness is represented in the idea of God protecting His children as a hen broods over her young. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." (Isaiah 66:13) "[He is] the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3)

vs. 8: My soul follows hard after You; your right hand upholds me.

That is the reason for rejoicing, because at the right hand of God, "there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

The right hand of the Lord brings salvation. "Shew your marvelous lovingkindness, O You that save by your right hand them which put their trust in You from those that rise up against them." (Psalm 17:7) "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." (Psalm 118:16) "His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the

victory." (Psalm 98:1) "You have also given me the shield of your salvation; and your right hand has held me up, and your gentleness has made me great." (Psalm 18:35)

He who is upheld by the right hand of the Lord, has a sure support. "Now unto Him that isable to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the glory and majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)--Present Truth, May 3, 1894--Original title: Moments with Psalm 63--Psalm 63:1-8

Chapter 104

Psalm 65: The Living Bread

In recent studies we have learned that the rain which comes down from heaven and waters the earth is the life of God. (See the article "Rain and Righteousness" in The Everlasting Gospel book) "You visit the earth, and water it. You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water." (Psalm 65:9)

How greatly, beyond our utmost thought, God enriches the earth in thus visiting it, we do not know, but we are told of some things that He does for it by means of the rain, and these we should believe and receive as from Him.

God's life poured out upon us in the form of rain is not different from His life, as it is revealed in Christ, or as the angels behold it in heaven. It is not strained off before it is poured from heaven, therefore all the righteousness and power that is comprised in the Divine life, indeed "all things that pertain to life and godliness," (2 Peter 1:3) are shed freely upon the earth in the rain. "Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." (Isaiah 45:8)

The earth, being without power of choice, has to receive the rain as what it is, and consequently, that which springs from the earth as the result of the rain, is identical with it in quality and virtue. "Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together: I the Lord have created it." (Isaiah 45:8)

If a man will recognize the fruit of the earth as the life of God he will know in eating food that he is a partaker of the Divine life and nature. Such a one will grow strong on the nurture of the Lord. It is a well-known fact that to be strong and well a man must eat strength-giving food, and the measure of his strength will be determined by the quality of his nutriment. Whosoever eats of the Lord will be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

Israel had a great work to do when they came out of Egypt. It was no less than is committed to the church of Christ today,--to be co-workers with God. But God does not ask men to do anything in their own strength, and so He fed Israel with food that was able to impart abundant strength, sufficient for the easy and successful accomplishment of every duty that lay in their path. They had "the corn of harvest; Man did eat angels' food." (Psalm 78:24-25)

But Israel did not receive the wonderful strength that there was in the manna. They even despised it, and in so doing, "They believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation." (Psalm 78:22)

They were eating and drinking of Christ, but they did not believe it, and so they only ate and drank condemnation to themselves. (1 Corinthians 11:29,34) Still the earth brings forth salvation and righteousness. "[Christ] is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." (John 6:50)

He says: "As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats me, even he shall live by me." (John 6:57)

Israel failed to discern the Lord's body in the food that was given them, and so, not receiving Christ in it, their diet was too poor for the task before them. It overtaxed their strength, and they fell by the way. Christ had an infinitely more trying journey before Him, but He received so much strength in living by the Father that, all the way, He was more than conqueror. (Romans 8:37)

In the same way, if we eat His flesh and drink His blood, (John 6:54) where He has put these for our use, we will triumph always. (2 Corinthians 2:14) If we do not, we will fail like Israel to enter in, and the simple and only cause of our failure will be unbelief, (Hebrews 3:19) that is, refusing to admit that God speaks the truth.

It was literally true that Christ lived by the Father. (John 6:57) He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. (John 4:32) Yet He was "made ... in all things ... like unto His brethren," (Hebrews 2:17) and had no secret

channel of communication with the Father that was denied to them. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." (John 4:34)

He ate and drank what they did, but not as they did. The will of God was perfectly assimilated into Christ's life, just as every one is made of what he eats and drinks. His testimony was, "I delight to do your will, O my God, yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

Since He lived by the will of God, as His meat and drink, it must be that this was conveyed to Him in the partaking of material food. There was so high a quality of nourishment in His diet, as He took it, recognizing God's life, or will in it, that it could sustain Him when others, who had last eaten at the same time as himself, were quite exhausted. At one time, He went in the strength of it, forty days and nights, and it was only afterwards that He was hungry.

It is evident that there is more strength in receiving the will, or word, of God without bread, than there is in eating bread without receiving in it the life of God. The Lord "suffered Israel to hunger, and fed them with manna,...that He might make them know that man does not live by bread alone." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Christ could say, "I know that His commandment is life." (John 12:50)

Just as the Divine life does not deteriorate when it comes down from heaven and comes forth in vegetable life with unimpaired vitality, nor when taken into the body of man does it change for the worse. It remains in every stage the life of God, and while the observer of nature sees in its different manifestations what he calls, at one stage, the law of plant life, and at another, the law of human development, it remains, all through, the law of the Divine life.

In thus imparting His life, God communicates in it the law of His own being, His own personal character and attributes. Thus the man who acknowledges that His whole life is derived from God, will also know that in his heart, in his very being, is the law of the Divine life, the instincts of the

Divine nature. This is what God promises in the new covenant: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. ... And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me." (Hebrews 8:10-11)

This covenant is fulfilled to every one who recognizes God's life in his food, and receives it with thankfulness. It was to fulfill the everlasting covenant, made with Abraham and his seed, that God gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness. "[He] satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out. ... For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant." (Psalm 105:40-42)

Christ, giving His disciples the juice of the grape, said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (1 Corinthians 11:25)

Through Isaiah, God calls us to "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ... And I will make an everlasting covenant with you." (Isaiah 55:2-3)

Thus we see how it is that when we acknowledge God in all our ways, He will direct our paths. He writes His law in our hearts, putting it into us as the law of our being, just as it is the law of His own existence. "And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones." (Isaiah 58:11)

God declared His covenant of life and peace to Israel on Sinai, but the people did not see the grace that was abounding there, flowing from Sinai to them in living streams of water. We are come unto Mount Zion, to the city of the living God. "The Lord's throne is in heaven." (Psalm 11:4) "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." (Psalm 97:2)

But always from the cloud comes the stream of the water of life, in the form of rain, dropping down righteousness on the earth, that the earth may bring forth salvation for the service of man. God speaks His living law from the midst of the cloud, and those who receive it in the water of life and the bread from heaven, live by it, and find it life everlasting.

To such the law is not a code of regulations, which one man can teach to another, but the life of Christ, His flesh and blood, which He gives for the life of the world. All who partake of this wonderful nutriment are "strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man, [And] Christ dwells in their hearts by faith," (Ephesians 3:16-17) so that they, in Him, are "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

No work is too difficult for them, for "[They] can do all things through Christ who strengthens [them];" (Philippians 4:13) and God has no secrets from them, for the Spirit, which is their life, the Divine law of their being, "searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10)--Present Truth, September 15, 1898--Psalm 65:9.

Chapter 105

Psalm 65: With Lavish Hand

Who that has a heart can spend a day in the country at this season of the year, when the showers and sun have given vegetation a vigorous stirring into life, without feeling the spirit of the 65th Psalm springing up within him?

"You make it soft with showers; You bless the springing thereof." (Psalm 65:10)

How lavish God is in multiplying the variety of plant life! A foreign journal says: "It is remarkable how the progress of geographical exploration is adding to our knowledge of the vegetable world. A few years ago it was authoritatively stated that the number of plants known to and described by botanists was 100,000; but the southern part of our continent and Eastern Asia are turning out novelties in great numbers. Works devoted to these topics are continually describing them. It is not improbable that one-half have not yet been known."

And the lavishness with which the Lord causes the earth to bring forth its fruit is only an illustration of the way in which the fruits of righteousness would spring forth in the hearts of men if they were as submissive to the Divine power as the earth is.--Present Truth, May 31, 1894--Psalm 65:10.

Chapter 106

Psalm 65: The Time of Reaping

"You visit the earth, and water it, You greatly enrich it; the river of food is full of water: You provided them corn, when You have so prepared the earth. You water her furrows abundantly; You settled the ridges thereof: You make it soft with showers; You bless the springing thereof. You crown the year with your goodness; and your paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the hills are girded with joy. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." (Psalm 65:9-13)

The harvest is the crown of the year. If that should fail, the ploughing and sowing the seed, and caring for the rising grain, would all be labor lost.

The harvest is the work of God, and every year, when the reaping time comes round, we ought to let our minds rest on the great harvest that is soon coming: "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." (Matthew 13:39)

If that did not come, all the labor that the heavenly Husbandman has bestowed on His field would be lost. But the harvest will surely come. The tares will be burned in the fire, and the wheat will be gathered home.

While they were growing together, especially in their first stages, it was very difficult to distinguish between the wheat and the tares. To the ordinary eye, both were the same. But the difference was made manifest in the harvest. While the wheat was bending with its weight of grain, the tares bore nothing. They had taken up as much space in the ground had absorbed the sunshine and the dew, but they gave nothing in return for the blessings received. They cumbered the ground that might have been filled to better advantage.

The lesson is that when the angel reapers gather in God's harvest, it is only those who bear fruit that will be garnered. The rest are bound in bundles for the fire.

The present year has not been a favorable one, in many places, for a rich harvest. This fact should lead all to consider if God is withholding His blessings for some good reason. It is God who sends the sunshine and the rain, which are so essential, in proper measure, for a good harvest. "By the breath of God ice is given: and the breadth of the waters is congealed. Yea, He lades the thick cloud with moisture; He spreads abroadthe cloud of His lightning: And it is turned round about by His guidance, that they may do whatsoever He commands them upon the face of the habitable world: Whether it be for correction, or for His land, or for mercy, that He causes it to come." (Job 37:10-13)

In the days of Israel, God gave them prosperity and abundance, but they did not recognize Him. "She said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. ... For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Therefore will I take back my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness." (Hosea 2:5,8-9)

But God did not desire to withdraw His gifts any longer than was needed to teach Israel the lesson that their blessings came from Him, and not from their lovers, that led them into sin, and then enslaved them. Although Israel had to go into the wilderness again for a time, to learn the lesson, God would speak comfort to her in the wilderness. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence." (Hosea 2:15)

There is a great controversy in the land at present over the causes to which England owes her prosperity, and how she may retain it. Men are striving over preferential tariffs and free trade as though in these were the secret of prosperity, while God, who gives the fruits of the earth, is not mentioned. When Israel forgot God, He withdrew His gifts for a time, and if

we now fail to recognize that our prosperity is due to Him, He may leave us to find out how much, or how little, the policies of statesmen can do for a country.

Let those who know God give Him the glory due unto His name. We can most truly serve our country, and secure its prosperity, not by political measures, but by personal obedience to God. "If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and you shall eat your bread to the fall, and dwell in your land safely." (Leviticus 26:3-5)--Present Truth, September 17, 1903--Psalm 65:9-13.

Chapter 107

Psalm 65: The Crown of the Year

"You crown the year with your goodness; and your paths drop fatness." (Psalm 65:11)

This is the season of the year when this verse specially applies; for it is the glorious harvest that is the crown of the year. "The little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn." (Psalm 65:12-13)

Travel through the country in the autumn months, when the ripened grain yet stands in the fields, and the trees are loaded with beautiful and luscious fruit, and you will surely see that here is a glorious crown for the year.

But glorious as is this crown of the year, bringing life to mankind, it is but the dust from the feet of the all-glorious Lord. Even the glory of the firmament is but a little glimpse of the glory of His face. "The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." (Nahum 1:3)

The showers of spring and summer--the overflow of the river of water of life (See Psalm 65:9-10)--prepare this rich crown for the year; they are the dust which shows where the Lord is walking, and in them is contained all the fatness that is needed for every living creature on earth.

Most people become fearful in times of drought, and think that they are sure to starve. They forget that He who has clouds of water for dust, can of the dust of the parched earth make streams of water. With Him dry sand is just as good for irrigating the soil as is a lake or a river. "[He] turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters." (Psalm 114:8)

Yes, He even makes His own people sources of living water, so that they need never fear a bad harvest. "If you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your

darkness be as the noonday; And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soulin drought, and make fat your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." (Isaiah 58:10-11)

Truly, "there is no want to them that fear Him." (Psalm 34:9)

Note the words, "You crown the year with your goodness." Then this fruit that we delight in is nothing less than the visible and tangible goodness of the Lord. If men would only open their eyes to see the goodness of the Lord, which He is making to pass before them so richly, they would all repent. The harvest of the year ought to be the time of the greatest ingathering of souls.

God not only makes His goodness pass before us, but He surrounds us with it. We are all familiar with the words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." (Psalm 23:6)

This word "follow" is from the Hebrew word that means to pursue. God's goodness is not lagging behind us, but it runs after us; and since "His word runs very swiftly," (Psalm 147:15) we may know that it is ever present, even though we cannot always see it as plainly as we can this autumn.

But God does more. "The king shall joy in your strength, O Lord; and in your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. For You prevent [go before] him with the blessings of goodness;You set a crown of pure gold on his head." (Psalm 21:1-3)

God's goodness goes before us, and it also follows after. We are surrounded by it. We breathe the atmosphere of God's grace and goodness. If we believe, we cannot fail to be made partakers of His goodness, and to be transformed by it.

Then do not forget to thank the Lord for the things which He has so richly given us to enjoy. Do not treat Him worse than you would a passing stranger

who does you a favor. Let everybody give thanks to Him, and give thanks at every remembrance of His goodness.

Thus will you glorify God, and prepare the way for Him to show you His salvation.--Present Truth, October 4, 1900--Psalm 65:11-13.

Chapter 108

Psalm 66: Tell It to Others

"Sacredness does not mean secrecy. Many persons suppose that sacred things are profaned by the violation of their secrecy. There is truth in this sometimes. But there are souls to whom the utterance of some of our most sacred thoughts or experiences would be a life blessing. The question is, Sacred to what, or to whom? Every high and holy experience ought to be sacred to a high and holy purpose, and that purpose is not always to be attained by burying an experience utterly out of the sight of men." (PP Editor's note: I couldn't locate the author of this paragraph, but it appeared anonymously in a newspaper and a Quaker magazine in 1892)

The Scripture admonishes us to tell others what we have seen and heard from the Lord. "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." (Psalm 66:16)

"Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." (Malachi 3:16)

God blesses men not for their own sake, simply, but that they may be a blessing to others. Let the language of every lover of the Lord be: "O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth your praise." (Psalm 51:15)--Present Truth, May 10, 1894--Psalm 66:16.

Chapter 109

Psalm 68: Your Strength

The pagan maxim, which too many quote as if it were Bible, is, "God helps him who helps himself."

But the truth revealed in the Bible is that God helps the man who is not able to help himself. Read the account of a storm on the sea, and of deliverance from it, as recorded in Psalm 107:23-30. Of the men in the storm it is said: "Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses." (Psalm 107:26-28)

So it was when Jehoshaphat, in behalf of the people, said to the Lord, "For we have no might against this great company which comes against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon You," (2 Chronicles 20:12) that the Lord sent deliverance. All these things "were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." (Romans 15:4) "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are; yet without sin. ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15,17)

Infirm means without strength; without strength implies being overcome by sin. So we learn that in the midst of defeat, when borne down under sin, we may come with boldness to Jesus, and find forgiveness and help.

Here is a word for those who fear that the strength which the Lord has given them may forsake them at some trying moment: "Your God has commanded your strength." (Psalm 68:28)

When God made the worlds, "He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9)

And today they stand by the same word. "You have a little strength." (Revelation 3:8)

Rejoice in that, and pray, "Strengthen, O God, that which You have wrought for us." (Psalm 68:28) "As your days, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25)

Not a "little strength" merely, but you shall be "strengthened with all might." (Colossians 1:11) "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)--Present Truth, May 21, 1903--Psalm 68:28.

Chapter 110

Psalm 69: Use Your Wings

Some time ago I caught a small insect, a tiny beetle, and guarded it carefully on all sides while preparing to examine it closely. But it suddenly surprised me by unfolding a pair of tiny wings that had been concealed under the wing cases, and mounting up above my head, out of reach and sight in a second.

Many times since, I have thought of this incident, when apparently caught in one of the enemy's trap, and hedged about on all sides, unable to escape in any direction except upward. Then these beautiful words from the pen of Mrs. E. G. White, a writer well known to the readers of Present Truth, have come as an inspiration: "The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise."--Ellen White, Steps to Christ, p. 104.

A vigorous use of these wings soon carries us out of the enemy's reach, above the mist and fog that veil the glory of the Lord, into the clear sunlight of His presence.

How many of the Psalms, beginning in a sorrowful strain, the utterance of one cast down and sorely beset with temptation and trial, break out into praise and thanksgiving to God as the soul ascends, like the sweet notes of the lark rising skyward, and end with a triumphant song of victory, like that of a bird escaped out of the snare of the fowler.

Take, for example, the 69th Psalm, beginning, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2 I sink in deep mire where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me;" (Psalm 69:1) and continuing in this strain till at last the struggling soul finds a way out of the "deep mire" and the "deep waters": "I am poor and sorrowful: let your salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song. and magnify Him with thanksgiving. And it shall please the Lord. ... Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas, and everything thatmoves therein, For God will save Zion." (Psalm 69:29-21,34-35)

Here the spirit of heaviness is exchanged for the garment of praise, and through praise the soul finds the salvation of the Lord that sets him up on high. This is a demonstration of: "Whoso offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me, and prepares a way that I may show him the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23,margin)

Many stances of deliverance wrought through praise when no way of escape seemed possible are given in the Scriptures to teach us how we may break through the snares of Satan, and escape out of the snare of the fowler.

Paul and Silas "prayed and sang praises to God" at midnight, and the earthquake resulted, opening their prison doors and bringing their jailer in terror to their feet. (Acts 16:25-29)

When Jehoshaphat's army "began to sing and to praise, the Lord set liers in wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten; ... and there were none that escaped." (2 Chronicles 20:22,24)

Let us keep "the wings of praise" in constant exercise, ascending on them into the clear atmosphere of heaven. Then they will be ready for any emergency, and we can "fly away and be at rest" in God, even while walking in the midst of trouble.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew and James and John from their fishing nets, it was not with the words, "Come to me, and I will save you," although they were sinners, and they needed the salvation which He had for them, and which He offers to all. But He said to them: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

They left all, and followed Him, and were prepared for service; and the preparation for service was the pruning off of their bad habits, the cleansing of them from sin, and the filling of them with the Holy Ghost.

The strongest incentive one can have to be cleansed and kept from sin is not the thought that the sin will result in the loss of the soul, but that it will cause the loss of some other soul.--Present Truth, May 8, 1902--Psalm 69:1-35.

Chapter 111

Psalm 69: Praise the Name of the Lord

"I will praise the name of the Lord with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock thathas horns and hoofs." (Psalm 69:30-31) "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15)

This thought is taken from Hosea 14, where we are instructed to say, "Take away iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips." (Hosea 14:2)

A better rendering is, "So will we render as calves our lips."

The lexicons show us that the Hebrew words "bullock" and "fruit" are almost identical, having a common origin, and with one underlying idea.

So when we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the fruit of our lips, which is not mere lip-service, but which comes from the heart, we are offering bullocks that are, and have been, more acceptable to God than bullocks with horns and hoofs.

The heathen rightly conceived that a human sacrifice was the highest and best that could be offered; but they were wholly mistaken as to the mode of offering. It is a "living sacrifice," not a dead one, that is acceptable unto God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)--Present Truth, May 12, 1904--Psalm 69:30-31.

Chapter 112

Psalm 71: The Commandment to Save

When we read of miraculous deliverances, like that of Peter from prison, of Daniel from the lions' den, or the three Hebrew captives from the fiery furnace, each one of us should be able to say with positive assurance, "You have given commandment to save me." (Psalm 71:2)

God commands deliverance: "You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." (Psalm 44:4)

And He delivers us in His righteousness, and causes us to escape every temptation and snare of the devil. How safely and securely we abide in God as our strong Tower! "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7) "And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psalm 27:6)--Present Truth, May 1, 1902--Psalm 71:2.

Chapter 113

Psalm 73: Seeing God's Goodness

The Psalmist says, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." (Psalm 73:1)

God is good to all, and "His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:9)

But those who are clean of heart see and recognize His goodness.

"Israel" does not mean a class of people whom God has distinguished from all others by being good to them, but simply those who, by having clean hearts, have recognized and acknowledged the goodness of the Lord bestowed upon all.

Only the pure in heart can see God, (Matthew 5:8) and only they who see Him can know Him. We see God now with the eye of faith, and faith is that which purifies the heart. "purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9)

As soon as we believe what God has said, we shall know for ourselves that God is good, not only to the world in general, but to us.--Present Truth, September 27, 1894--Psalm 73:1.

Chapter 114

Psalm 73: The Counsel of God

"You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me into glory." (Psalm 73:24)

What a wonderful assurance is this! It shows us that the counsel of God will, if followed, lead one to glory. God's purpose for men is that they shall be glorified. One may say, "I thought that God's purpose was that He himself should be glorified."

Yes; but when we are told to give glory to God, it is only that we shall give Him the glory or honor that is due Him. We cannot add anything to His glory; for all glory is His. (Matthew 6:13) He is: "The God of glory;" (Psalm 29:3) "the King of glory." (Psalm 24:7)

All glory comes from Him, and He desires us to give Him glory, or render Him homage, only that we ourselves may be glorified. God gave himself to us in Christ, in order that He might bring "many sons unto glory." (Hebrews 2:10)

And how will He do this? By His counsel. That which distinguishes the Lord above all others, is His skill as Counselor. The name of the Lord is "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God," (Isaiah 9:6) and therefore He is "wonderful in counsel." (Isaiah 28:29)

The council of the heathen will come to nothing, but: "The counsel of the Lord shall stand for ever; the thoughts of His heart to all generations." (Psalm 33:11)

The Lord says: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:10)

Whatever He has promised, He is able also to perform, for even as He is "great in counsel, [He is] mighty in work." (Jeremiah 32:19) "[He] works all things after the counsel of His own will." (Ephesians 1:11)

How comforting, then, for us to be assured that His counsel is to bring us to glory. His thoughts toward us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil," (Jeremiah 29:11,RV) to give us hope in our latter end. There is no chance for doubt in this matter, for God has made it as sure as the sun in the heavens. "When God made promise to Abraham," (Hebrews 6:13) which promise is what we depend on when we flee for refuge to Christ, "because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself. ... [Being] willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, [He] confirmed it by an oath; That by two immutable things, in which was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope that before us." (Hebrews 6:13,17-18) "[God] has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion." (Jeremiah 10:12)

The same power and wisdom that created all things, still upholds them; therefore the existence of the earth and the heavens is positive proof to us of the steadfastness of the counsel of God. We can see it with our own eyes. Lord says to us: "I will instruct you in the way which you shall go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you." (Psalm 32:8,RV)

He takes the responsibility upon himself; He leads us in the way that we should go. He will ensure we are going in the right way, and having success here and hereafter, provided we will but submit to His counsel. Is it not well? Can we not trust Him, since He has placed such testimony to His faithfulness before us in plain sight?

In contrast to the counsel of the Lord, is the counsel of the ungodly. What about that? It comes to nothing, for the ungodly are themselves "like the chaff, which the wind drives away." (Psalm 1:4)

The counsel which proceeds from such ones, no matter how plausible it seems, is nothing but deception. But God is "from everlasting to everlasting." (Psalm 103:17) and His counsel is as enduring as himself; therefore all who abide in His counsel will live forever, and live in prosperity. Where shall we find this counsel? In His Word, for that is but the expression of His thought toward us. He says: "Have I not written unto you excellent things in counsels and knowledge; To make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may carry back words of truth to them that send you?" (Proverbs 22:20-21,RV)

Let us therefore say in sincerity: "Your testimonies also are my delight, and the men of my counsel." (Psalm 119:24,margin)--Present Truth, April 21, 1897--Psalm 73:24.

Chapter 115

Psalm 76: Comfort from Adversity

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; the remainder of wrath shall You restrain." (Psalm 76:10)

These words have doubtless given comfort to many Christians in times of persecution. They remind us that God rules even among wicked men, saying to them, as He does to the raging sea: "Hitherto shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed." (Job 38:11)

They show believers that even though the heathen may rage against them, they can still give thanks always for all things.

A little analysis of the text, however, will make it possible for us to read it more understandingly, and so to receive from it more spiritual consolation. The thoughtful reader cannot fail to have been struck by the statement concerning the "remainder of wrath." The words would seem to imply that God will "restrain" the wrath that remains beyond what He is able to make to praise Him.

Then the question arises: Why does He not make all the wrath of man to praise Him? This, indeed, is what is implied in the first clause of the verse, for there is no qualification. Since all things, without limitation, are possible with God, it is certain that this "remainder of wrath" cannot be that which it is beyond His power to make praise Him. If He has power to "restrain" it, that in itself is to get praise from it.

A clearer idea is suggested by the reading of the Revision: "The residue of wrath shall You gird upon yourself."

This is the exact meaning of the Hebrew: chagar: "to bind around, to gird upon oneself, as clothing, or a sword."

From the fact that the personal pronoun does not appear in the Hebrew text, the translators of the old version probably thought that the verb meant here merely to hold back; but there can be no doubt that it means to gird upon, as in every other instances of its occurrences, and the pronoun is naturally implied.

Now a word about the "remainder." That which is left of anything obviously includes all that there is of it, and so we may and should read the text as it is in the Norwegian: "The wrath of man prepares your praise; with the utmost limit of wrath You gird yourself about."

The scholarly version of M. Segond has:

L'houme to célèbre meme dans an fureur
Quand tu te revets de tont ton courtoux,
Man praises You even in his fury,
When You clothe yourself with all his rage.

Now we see that we have here a much stronger statement than that in the 2nd Psalm, that God laughs at the raging of the heathen. Yes, He takes the utmost limit of seemingly unbounded human wrath and binds it upon himself as a garment, making it minister to His pleasure.

A striking illustration of this truth is found in the case of Joseph and his brethren. The brothers, "moved with envy," (Acts 7:9) sold Joseph into Egypt, intending that to be a substitute for death as a means of putting an end to him. But it was in reality the means of advancing him to royal honor and power, and of making him the saviour of the world. So Joseph said to his brethren: "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

With a still stronger statement, the psalmist leaves the wicked brothers and their wrath altogether out of the question, saying: "He [God] sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant." (Psalms 105:17)

Still more forcibly is the truth of our text illustrated in that which embraces all Christian experience in connection with Satanic rage. The high priest counseled the death of Christ, in order to put an end to His influence, and thereby was an instrument in making the "good tidings of great joy [effective] to all people." (Luke 2:10)

Thus in the prayer of the Spirit-filled disciples: "For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done." (Acts 4:27-28)

They didn't mean it so, but all the rage of men against Jesus was simply a means of working out God's purpose for the salvation of the world. And so it must ever be.

It becomes us, therefore, ever to keep alive such living faith that instead of being dismayed or discouraged by any sort of adversity, we may give thanks for it, knowing that it is working God's praise, and so our salvation. It matters not that we cannot see how any good can come of it; we may then rejoice the more, because God is preparing for us a great surprise.

The text gives us another thought that should always be kept in mind as a support to the weakest of us. Since God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, using their utmost fury as a garment of praise, how much more will He not glorify himself by the feeble, often erring, yet sincere, and loyal, service of those who love Him.--Medical Missionary, January 27, 1909--Psalm 76:10.

Chapter 116

Psalm 78: Healthy Appetite

When God fed the Israelites in the wilderness with bread from heaven, "He ... commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven. And rained down manna upon them to eat." (Psalm 78:23-24)

This is a demonstration of how He is constantly providing food for the children of men,--commanding the clouds, and raining down bread. "For the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." (Isaiah 55:10)

But that food which comes in the ordinary course, springing from the earth upon which rests the curse of sin, is not a perfect food; it lacks the fullness of strength that was imparted to man by the life-giving fruits of Eden. This was indicated in the words to Cain: "When you till the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto you her strength." (Genesis 4:12)

Contrast this with the description of the manna: "Man did eat the bread of the mighty," (Psalm 78:25) bread that imparted perfect strength and fullness of life. It came direct from heaven, untouched by the curse that rests upon the earth. It was the corn of heaven, the food of "[the] angels that excel in strength. ... [And God] who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles," (Psalm 103:20,5) gave it to His chosen people that by partaking of it they might have their strength perfectly renewed, and be healed of all their diseases.

The Israelites, however, were not satisfied with the simple, health-giving food. "They tempted God by asking meat for their lust." (Psalm 78:18)

Although the food provided by God perfectly met all the needs of the human system, the people were dissatisfied; they wanted something to gratify their taste and please their palates; they asked meat "for their lust."

The normal appetite of a healthy person is but the expression of the needs of the body. That which we call hunger is the stomach's interpretation of the wants of the system, prompting us to supply them.

When inferior food is eaten that cannot build up the body, or in cases of malnutrition, when the food is imperfectly digested and not assimilated, although large quantities of food may be consumed the individual is not satisfied, because the needs of the system are not supplied. Such a one is habitually hungry.

But when, as in the case of the manna, a perfectly-balanced food, easy of assimilation is provided, one that will nourish the whole body and give perfect strength, the desire for other food is simply for the gratification of appetite or lust.

It is doubtless true that food that is not relished is not well digested; but that does not prove that taste is to direct and control our eating. If we were as unperverted as even the lower animals are, we might perhaps be guided by our taste; but our appetites have been sadly perverted, and often choose that which is wholly bad.

Therefore reason must control. We must know what is good, and then if our perverse appetite is capricious, it must be trained, the same as a spoiled child. If one's will is set to follow that which is best, it is a very easy matter to convince the appetite; for it should be known that everything that is really good for the body is also delicious to the taste that is not corrupted.

There is only one reason for eating, and that is to gain and preserve strength. Whoever desires or takes anything, whether in quality or quantity, that is not absolutely needed for the building up of his body, is simply living to gratify lust; and it may be set down as a fact that in such a case the baser passions will also assert themselves, since all lust is one.

But whoever can keep his appetite down to the actual needs of his body, can keep every sinful lust in check. Such a one knows the joy of life, and he is the only one who does know it. That one alone truly discerns the Lord's

body, and knows for a certainty that God has ordained that we should live by food, in order that we may constantly see that our strength is of Him, and not of ourselves.

And as he enjoys the food given from heaven, he will realize that the joy of the Lord is his strength. "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)--Present Truth, November 27, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 78:18-25.

Chapter 117

Psalm 84: The Soul's Desire

"How amiable are your tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God." (Psalm 84:1-2)

The house where the Lord dwells is a most desirable place. The word "amiable" means lovely and lovable. We often speak of an amiable person, meaning one who is lovely in character, and a desirable and pleasant companion. The word is used nowadays of persons, and not a thing; but from the ordinary use of it we have no difficulty in understanding its use in the verse quoted.

Perhaps there are very few who would dare use the words of the second verse, and apply them to themselves; and yet there are none who may not use them. Indeed, if we dare not use them of ourselves we have no right to use them at all; for we cannot speak for anybody but ourselves. We are not commissioned to speak for David, or any other man. Let David speak for himself.

When we read the Bible we ought to put ourselves in the place of the writer. The language which the Holy Spirit puts into the mouth of a man is not for that man alone, but for all men. We are therefore to make it our own, so that it can come, not from our lips only, but from our hearts, as spontaneously as if it had never been uttered by any other man, and had never been written.

It is to be our own language as much as though we ourselves had spoken it by the Holy Spirit. It is only so that the Word becomes to us a living Word.

Let us now see if it is not indeed a fact that every man may use this language of the Psalms, if he will. Nothing is more certain than that in all men there is a desire to change their state. In some form or other we shall

find this desire in even the most stolid man. It is natural for man to seek to better their condition.

And one very remarkable thing is that the more one obtains the more he desires. As soon as a man begins to acquire wealth, he begins to desire it more than ever before. Men have a feeling of dissatisfaction. They are conscious of a longing for something that they have not, and they seek to satisfy this longing in various ways.

Some seek to appease it by the accumulation of money, others seek it in political or social influences, and others seek it in pleasures or dissipation. But in none of these things is satisfaction found. The more of these things they have, the more unsatisfied they become.

Now suppose we should see a man continually eating and yet always hungry. He eats a great quantity of food, and yet it does him no good. What should we say of him? That he is not eating the kind of food that he needs. We should say that his system does not demand that kind of food that he is giving it, and that is the reason it does him no good. His system cannot be satisfied with that which it is not calling for, no matter how much he may give it. Give it the food that it really demands, and it will be satisfied.

Even so it is with the souls of men. They long for something that they have not; but the fact that they are not satisfied with what they ordinarily get, shows that they are not really longing for that. They may think that they are, but the fact that it does not satisfy the desire should show them their mistake. The trouble is, they are deceived. They do not know what is good, and what is not. This is why the Lord calls out, "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and you labor for that which does not satisfy? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isaiah 55:1-2)

Men spend their money and labor for that which is not bread, and which does not satisfy. The Lord promises food that is good. What is it? Jesus

answers, "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. ... I am that bread of life." (John 6:33,48)

This is bread that satisfies, because it gives life. So we read of those who flee to the Lord, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house." (Psalm 36:8)

Also the Psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul. ... Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:1,5)

Christ is the living bread which satisfies by supplying life. But Christ is God. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

Therefore since the body cries out only for that food which will satisfy its wants, it is true of all men that their heart and flesh are crying out for the living God. Whether they know it or not, it is the fact. Happy is the man who has learned what is good, and what can give true satisfaction, so that he can sing with the spirit and the understanding.

O Christ, in Thee my soul has found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace and joy I long have sought,
The bliss till now unknown.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's love, and life, and endless joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.
--Unknown author.

--Present Truth, July 25, 1895--Psalm 84:1-2.

Chapter 118

Psalm 84: Dwelling in the House of the Lord

That mortal men on this earth may in this present age not only enter the dwelling-place of the Lord, but may actually reside in the Lord's house, is a fact made very plain in the Scriptures. Let us read a few familiar texts. First, we have a blessing on those who dwell in the house of the Lord: "Blessed are they that dwell in your house; they will be still praising You." (Psalm 84:4)

They must praise the Lord, for He inhabits the praises of His people: "But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel." (Psalm 22:3)

And, "In His temple everything says, Glory." (Psalm 29:9,RV)

Without wasting any time arguing with those who would deprive themselves of the blessings of the Lord by claiming that they are not real, we read: "How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and You shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures." (Psalm 36:7-8)

We are dealing with facts, not theories; therefore we have only to do with the fact that we may and should dwell now in the house of the Lord, and not with any explanation as to how it can be. With the text last quoted, about resting under the shadow of God's wings, and being satisfied with the fatness of His house, connect the following: "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God;in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shallyou trust; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrowthat flies by day; Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. 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 thewicked. Because you have made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High your habitation; There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." (Psalm 91:1-10)

Here we see that the safety of God's people during the awful time of trouble just preceding the coming of the Lord, (See Daniel 12:1; Luke 21:26-28) will be due to the fact that they have been and are then dwelling in the house of the Lord. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23:6) The plagues that will be poured out upon the earth cannot touch them, because they will be dwelling safe in the place whence the plagues come.

It is as one who is safe from the shot that comes from a fort, because he is in the fort whence the fire comes. And yet these people are at the same time on the earth, in the midst of the plagues, with the wicked falling all around them. See also in this connection: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." (Psalm 27:4-6)

Now we may profitably consider how we may dwell in the house of the Lord, that is, what is necessary on our part. Assuming that every reader desires this privilege, many fail because they do not knew where the Lord lives. With Job they say, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23:3)

Read then these few texts, and let them be for ever fastened in your memory: "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57:15) "Whither shall I go from your Spirit? or whither shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there

shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10) "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24) "Thus says the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me; and where is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

God's house, then, is the whole universe. That is a fact, and yet there are myriads of people who do not dwell in God's house; they are in it as defilers of it, not recognizing the sacredness of the place where they are.

God dwells everywhere, and since His presence sanctifies, every place is holy. Now holiness becomes His house, and if everybody would but remember this, and recognize all space as God's dwelling place, all men would be holy. The temple sanctifies the gold, (Matthew 23:17) and the altar sanctifies the gift. (Matthew 23:19) Continually to recognize the presence of the Lord, is to make one a constant dweller in His house.

He who thus dwells in the house of the Lord, will behold the beauty of the Lord. He will discern the Lord's body, for he will be dwelling in God, and so he will live indeed. And God will dwell in him, for he will not partake of anything but the perfect life of the Lord.

Thus beholding the beauty and glory of the Lord, he will be changed into the same image, and overcoming the world, he will be made a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out. "Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." (Revelation 3:12)

So shall he dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.--Present Truth, December 15, 1898--Psalm 84:4.

Chapter 119

Psalm 84: God is a Sun

"For the Lord God is a sun and a shield." (Psalm 84:11)

As the sun gives light and heat to the earth, so the Lord is the light of men, and warms them by His grace. All the heat and light that the earth receives, in whatever form, comes from the sun. The light by means of which we find our way at night through the crowded streets of the city, or by which we read in our study, comes from the sun. So with the cheerful wood blaze, or the glowing coals that warm our rooms in dreary winter; all the heat comes from the sun.

The sun gives light, and light is life. All the plants turn to the sun! Who has not noticed a plant growing in a dark cellar? Its life is very feeble. In the darkness it is almost dead. But let an opening be made, so that a ray of light can shine through, and at once it revives. It will begin to grow in the direction of the light. Without the light that the sun furnishes to the earth there could be no plant life, nor animal life either.

But life means growth. As the light of the sun is the life of plants, so it is the cause of their growth. As the plant grows, it is by storing up the light and heat of the sun. Those plants that grow very quickly, that come to maturity from the seed in a few weeks or months, have in them but very little heat. They are worthless for fuel. But the sturdy oak, that is centuries in growing,--which grows so slowly that in a year no difference can be detected in its size,--stores up immense quantities of the sun's heat. Other trees are of even slower growth, and store up more heat.

These woods become buried in the ground, and in the course of centuries are transformed into coal. Then it is used as fuel, and gives to us the heat which it has stored up from the sun. The reason why we get so much more heat from the coal than from the direct rays of the sun is, that in the coal we have the concentrated heat of the sun's rays for years.

What the sun is to the earth, and to plant--life, that God is to His people. "The Lord God is a sun." (Psalm 84:11)

As the sun, by its light, gives physical life to the plants, so God gives spiritual life--the only real life--to His people. Christ's life is the light of the world. As the oak tree stores up the heat of the sun, so the one who lives in the light of God stores up that light, which is His life. That light and life that are the life and growth of the Christian are to be given out for the enlightenment and warmth of others.

Someone may say, that in order to carry out the figure completely, it ought to be that the Christian of the slowest growth should have the most of the life of God to give out. But let it not be forgotten that the just live by faith.

The Christian's life is not measured by years, but by the faith manifested. The more faith, which means humility and trust, the more of the life of God is appropriated. And the more life appropriated, the more will be given out to others, for the life of God cannot be hidden.--Present Truth, June 4, 1896--Psalm 84:11.

Chapter 120

Psalm 86: God Binds Our Wrath

Psalm 86:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; the remainder of wrath shall You restrain.

We frequently hear this text of Scripture quoted. But few get from the rendering in our common version all the strength that they should. The Hebrew word rendered "restrain" means "to gird," "to bind about," and the word rendered "remainder" means, as one can see by a moment's thought, at the extremity, the last portion.

The idea therefore is that God takes the utmost limits of human wrath and girds himself with it. See Revised Version. So far is He from being troubled by the raging of the heathen, that He takes all the strength of their wrath and binds it about himself as a girdle. This is the way that He restrains it, and makes it praise Him. He even wears it as clothing.

What comfort is there in this for us? This: that since God can give glory to himself out of the raging hate of men, surely He can much more be glorified by our sincere and loving, and even though feeble and blundering, efforts to serve Him.--Present Truth, May 30, 1901--Psalm 86:10.

Chapter 121

Psalm 89: His Mercy Endures Forever

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 89:1)

But nobody can live upon a past experience. The Christian's rejoicing does not consist merely in telling what God did at some time in the past even for him. Life--real life--is not in the future nor in the past; it is now. Therefore the only reason why we can sing of the mercies of God forever, is that "His mercy endures forever." (Psalm 136:1) "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever; your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens." (Psalm 89:2) "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5) "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercytoward them that fear Him. ... The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:11,17)

Someone will say, "Yes, the mercy of the Lord is forever, but only to a certain class; there comes a time when His mercy ceases for sinners; and may it not be that it has now ceased?"

To this it is necessary only to say that it will be time enough for people to talk about God's mercy ceasing, when they read something in the Bible to that effect; but in the face of the statement, repeated many times, that "His mercy endures for ever," and that: "The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:9)

It is exceedingly presumptuous for anybody to say that there ever will come a time when God's mercy for anybody will cease, or be in the least diminished. God's mercy is himself, for He is love, and it must be as enduring as He is. We read that He is "from everlasting to everlasting," (Psalm 90:2) and even so have we just read of His mercy. To say that there will come a time when God's mercy will cease, is the same as saying that

there will come a time when His righteousness will cease. There is no more reason to limit God's mercy than there is to limit His righteousness.

True, it is said that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, but the same thing is also said of His righteousness. But neither the one nor the other statement gives us any reason to conclude that either God's mercy or His righteousness will ever cease, or ever be restricted in any degree.

The righteousness of God endures for ever, yet it will not be found on everybody. Why not? Because so many will not submit unto the righteousness of God. "The free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life." (Romans 5:18)

But many reject the gift. It is evident, then, that God cannot be charged with unrighteousness. If men will not take what He freely gives, He is clear. So His tender mercy is over all, and it endures for ever; and the fact that many utterly refuse His loving mercy, does not in the least diminish it. In an otherwise most excellent hymn, occur these words:

But if you still His call refuse,
And all His wondrous love abuse,
Soon will He sadly from you turn,
Your bitter prayer for pardon spurn.
--Emma F. R. Campbell, Hymn: Jesus of Nazareth Passeth By.

No, never! That is not the Lord. Says Jesus, "Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) "He is able to save to the uttermost," (Hebrews 7:25) not simply the worst sinner; but to the longest time that any sinner may need and desire pardon, because "He ever lives to make intercession for us." (Hebrews 7:25)

There will indeed be a time when men who have abused His love, and definitely refused His call of mercy, will call, and will not be heard, (Proverbs 1:24,33) but the reason why is that:

• They do not desire pardon--cleansing from sin.

• They would gladly escape the consequences of sin, but they do not desire holiness.

• Their sorrow is not godly sorrow that works repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

He does not heed their cry, because they do not ask for anything that He has to give. Even though they might seem to ask for life, they do not really ask for it, because they do not ask for holiness.

There will never be a time when a truly repentant sinner will be rejected by the Lord. The only reason why probation will cease, will be that there will no longer be any need of it. The decree will be made: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:11)

This will not be an arbitrary fixing of destiny. It will not be that God's patience is exhausted, so that He will say: "I will not stand this any longer; I will not give them any more opportunity."

No; it will simply be the announcement of the fact that everybody has made a final decision, so that no change would be made even were probation to be continued for a thousand years. And the mercy of God will be as great when the wicked are destroyed, as it was when Jesus hung on the cross. "To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for His mercy endures for ever: ... But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for His mercy endures for ever. To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures for ever. To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures for ever: And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures for ever: And Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:10,15-20)

The greater the thing refused, the greater the loss. Let no one think that because the mercy of God is so infinite and so eternal, therefore he is safe without it. What a foolishly fatal conclusion!

The fact that the mercy of God is so great, filling heaven and earth, is the great reason why we should accept it; for if we reject it, there will be nothing left for us but eternal destruction. If His mercy were feeble, it might be rejected with comparative impunity; but since it fills eternity, the rejection of it is an eternal loss.

Let us rather at once accept His mercy, and accept it as freely as He gives it; and then, since "His mercy endures for ever," we, being filled and surrounded and transformed and preserved by His mercy, must also endure for ever. Then indeed we can sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.--Present Truth, October 20, 1898--Psalm 89:1-2.

Chapter 122

Psalm 89: God's Faithfulness

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, mercy shall be built up forever; your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn unto David my servant, Your Seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." (Psalm 89:1-4)

Christ is God's Chosen, in whom His soul delights, (Isaiah 42:1) and He is the Seed of David. (Romans 1:3) He is "the Root and the Offspring of David." (Revelation 22:16)

The tabernacle of David, that is fallen down, is to be built up (Amos 9:11) by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: "Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things." (Acts 15:14-17)

And the throne of David is to be perpetuated to all generations through the resurrection of Christ: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:29-31)

But by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead all who believe are begotten unto a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away. (1 Peter 1:3-5) Therefore the covenant with David,

unto which God swore, is the covenant that assures us an "inheritance among the saints in light;" (Colossians 1:12) and so we see that it is identical with the covenant with Abraham, to which God swore by himself, and which gives us strong consolation and hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 6:13,20) The Seed of David is the Seed of Abraham, and if we are Christ's we are a part of this Seed, and heirs according to the promise. "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

So we find in the following scripture the direct promise of eternal life to us: "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His Seed shall endure for ever, and His throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon and as a faithful witness in heaven." (Psalm 89:35-37)

As surely as the sun and moon endure, so surely will God give eternal life to every one who trusts Him. His faithfulness is written in the heavens. The sun and moon are witnesses to it. "When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself." (Hebrews 6:13)

This was not for Abraham's sake, but for our sake. Abraham did not need the oath for confirmation, because his faith was perfect before the oath was made; but it was given that "We might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. ... God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed himself by an oath." (Hebrews 6:18,17)

Do you realize what is involved in the oath of God? how strong the consolation is? Think of it a moment, and when you have grasped its meaning, you may continue to think of it forever.

He promised salvation to every one who would accept it in faith; to all who would simply trust Him to save them. Then He pledged himself its surety for the fulfillment of the promise. He interposed himself between us and the possibility of failure, staking His own existence upon the result.

When one pledges anything, it is well known that the thing pledged is lost if the price is not paid, or the vow performed. So in swearing by himself God put himself in the position where He would forfeit His own existence if His promise should fail.

Let us in passing remember that this promise is to all: "Whosoever will, let him come." (Revelation 22:17)

God has chosen the poor of this world: "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?" (James 2:5) "And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen." (1 Corinthians 1:28)

If God's promise should fail in the case of the poorest or the most insignificant and despised of human beings, that would be a failure just the same as if He should reject the whole world. If one poor soul should come to Him and fail to find forgiveness for a sin confessed, or help in time of need, that would be a failure of God's promise, to which He swore by himself, and therefore that very moment God would cease to exist.

Does someone say that it is irreverent to talk about God's ceasing to exist? It is no more irreverent than it is to talk about His not being able or willing to forgive any sin that is acknowledged, or to provide all the help that any soul needs. Would that all men might see that to doubt God's willingness to forgive is to deny His existence, so that it is the rankest infidelity not to accept pardon, or to doubt that God helps in every time of need.

And now what constant assurance have we before our eyes that God lives, and that therefore His promise is sure? His faithfulness is written in the very heavens. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking." (Isaiah 40:26)

The whole universe depends on God. If He should cease to exist, everything would that instant cease to exist. God made the sun, moon, and stars, "for signs, and for seasons, and days, and years." (Genesis 1:14)

That thing of which they exist as a sign is the faithfulness of God. The sun, moon, and stars are evidences that God still lives, and as surely as He lives, may we come with boldness to the throne of grace, with perfect confidence that we shall "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16) "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations." (Psalm 119:89-90)--Present Truth, October 27, 1898--Psalm 89:1-4,35-37.

Chapter 123

Psalm 89: The Sins of Our Fathers

The Lord teaches us to pray: "Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers." (Psalm 89:8,RV)

Therefore we know that He will not punish us for what our ancestors have done.

"But," you exclaim, "doesn't He say that He visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation?" "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Exodus 20:5)

Yes; He does; but it is only upon them that hate Him; that is, upon them who are committing the same sins that their forefathers committed. The infidel thinks that he has a case against God, when he says that it is not fair to punish one man for what another does; but God will never do anything of the kind. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways." (Psalm 145:17) And some day everybody will say so. Why not begin now?--Present Truth, December 5, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 89:8.

Chapter 124

Psalm 89: Our Shield

The best shield in the world is not Herr Dowe's new bulletproof cuirass. One might suppose, from the great interest this invention has excited throughout the military world, that something had been discovered in this line far superior to anything that was known before. But this is not so.

Thousands of men have been far better shielded in battle, though openly exposed to the enemy's fire, than they would have been if clad in Herr Dowe's cuirass. Nor is there any secret about this. Every Christian will understand it.

It is the shield which David had when he went forth to meet Goliath, and said to him, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." (1 Samuel 17:45)

That is a shield which can protect against cannon-balls as well as bullets, and against every weapon that man has ever invented; and the protection that it affords is just as real as that which any person ever enjoyed.

God said to Abram, "Fear not, Abram; I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

And the Psalmist testifies, "The Lord God is a sun and shield." (Psalm 89:11) "But You, O Lord, are a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head." (Psalm 3:3) "You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in your word." (Psalm 119:114)

And of His children God has said, "In righteousness shall you be established, you shall be far fromoppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me; whosoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the

waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." (Isaiah 49:14-17)

It is God who "breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, and burns the chariot in the fire." (Psalm 46:9)

With His protection about us, we are safe indeed. All may have the shield who will take it; and it is very much easier to get than one of the bullet-proof coats of Herr Dowe. The poorest can afford it just as well as the rich; for it costs nothing, except that which every man has in abundance, and can well afford to give.

It costs only the giving up of self,--the surrender of our will for the will of God. Then so long as He sees it to be best for us to have life and health and strength, we shall have them, in spite of all the military weapons of all the armies of the world.

And when He sees it to be best that we should die, a protection against death would be a very unfortunate thing for us to have.--Present Truth, June 21, 1894--Psalm 89:11.

Chapter 125

Psalm 89: The Joyful Sound (1896)

"The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours: as for the world and the fulness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in your name. You have a mighty arm: strong is your hand, and high is your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne: mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:11-16)

It is thus that the Psalmist sings of the mercies of the Lord, and makes known His faithfulness. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 89:1)

The "joyful sound" which is to be proclaimed "to all generations" is none other than the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10)

It is the Gospel, that we have before us, for it alone is the theme of the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Let us fix our attention especially upon verses 14 and 15 of the Psalm from which we have quoted: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne: mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance." (Psalm 89:14-15)

First note the words "justice" and "habitation." The first is rendered from the Hebrew word for "righteousness." Righteousness is God's character, which is His law; for He rules by himself; His own being is the law of the universe. Of this righteousness the law of ten commandments is the summary. "All your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172)

"All unrighteousness is sin," (1 John 5:17) and, "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

Therefore all righteousness is obedience to the law. So we may read that righteousness, or law, is the habitation of God's throne.

But if we look at the margin we shall find "establishment" given as an alternative reading for "habitation." This brings us a little closer to the idea of the original Hebrew word, which means, "basis" or "foundation," which is the word given in the Revision. So the sum of the first part of Psalm 89:14 is that God's righteousness, or His law, is the foundation of His throne. His kingdom is established upon and by righteousness.

From this throne of righteousness or law the "joyful sound" proceeds. It is the "throne of grace" to which we are exhorted to "come boldly," "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

It is there that: "Mercy and truth are met together, [and] righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalm 85:10)

But if we should let the story rest here, some sincere souls would be sure to get frightened later on, and others would accuse God of not being equal in all His ways, even as they have already done. So let us read further about this same throne of grace, whence the joyful sound of the Gospel of grace proceeds.

The Apostle John was permitted to see this throne in heaven. That it was the throne of grace, we may be sure from the fact that in the midst of it "stood a Lamb as it had been slain," (Revelation 5:6) and also that at the very time he saw it songs of thanksgiving for redemption through His blood were being sung. (See Revelation 5:6,9) Now read: "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thundering and voices." (Revelation 4:5)

Is that "the joyful sound" of which the Psalmist speaks? Can there be any joyful sound in the thunderings? It is even so. Examine the Revised Version, and you will see that "the joyful sound" is really "the trumpet sound." The

"everlasting Gospel" of peace is proclaimed "with a loud voice." (See Revelation 14:6-7)

An incident in the life of Christ on earth may help to make it clear. When the hour had come that He should be glorified, He prayed, "Father, glorify your name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered; others said, An angel spoke to Him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." (John 12:28-30)

Jesus did not need that assurance from heaven; but the people did. Was it not a joyful sound? Can there be any more joyful news than that God is glorified in the man Christ Jesus? That is salvation for mankind. Yet the people at that time did not know the joyful sound. Some were discerning enough to perceive that it was an articulate voice from heaven; but to the most of them it was ordinary thunder. They did not know the day of their visitation. "The God of glory thunders. ... The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." (Psalm 29:3-4) "God thunders marvellously with His voice; great things does Hewhich we cannot comprehend." (Job 37:5)

The terrible voice of reproof with which God makes "the pillars of heaven tremble," is but a small whisper of His greatness. What wonder, then, that no soul could comprehend if He should thunder with all His power. (See Job 26:11,14,RV)

But, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" (Psalm 89:15) of the thunderings that come from His throne of righteousness and grace. They who do, will be able to say, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey

and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11)

For let it not be forgotten that the joyful sound that proceeds from the throne of God is but the voice of His law. To the unbeliever it is a thunder of wrath; to the believer it is the voice of mercy and peace, for God speaks only peace to His people. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints: but let them not turn again to folly." (Psalm 85:8)

When God came from Sinai, and from His right hand a fiery law went forth for His saints, it was because "He loved the people." (Deuteronomy 33:3) "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20) "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

Therefore it was that the entering of the law made the offence to abound, or be seen to be "exceeding sinful." (Romans 7:13)

At Sinai the law appeared in its greatest majesty and awfulness; therefore it is at Sinai that the awful and deadly nature of sin is seen. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

Therefore the greatest exhibition of the grace of God is to be seen at Sinai. Yet it was there that the God of glory thundered. "There were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ... And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice." (Exodus 19:16,19)

Mount Sinai was a representation of God's throne, and indeed, it was for the time His throne; because: "The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount," (Exodus 19:20) and it was the embodiment of His law. "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak with us, and

we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Exodus 20:18-21)

Notice that while the people "removed and stood afar off" as God thundered forth His law, "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Exodus 20:21)

God did not want the people to be afraid of Him. Moses told them not to fear, because God had come only to prove them. What had He come to prove? Their faith and trust; for that is what God always tries. He proved Abraham as to his faith, and then confirmed His promise to him with an oath. That test and that oath were for the benefit of all people after him, including us and those who stood at the base of Sinai. They, as well as we, had the history of Abraham and of God's dealings with him. If they had fully trusted God, and relied upon His oath, nothing could have made them afraid, for they would have known that: "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

His oath pledged himself and His existence to save them and us by His righteousness. It was a token of "His great love wherewith He loved us." (Ephesians 2:4)

So then though we hear the thunders of His righteousness, we need but nestle the closer to Him in loving confidence.

If we have a friend and protector, the more powerful he is the more we can trust him. Every fresh evidence of his power is but an additional cause for us to rejoice in it. So when God at Sinai showed the might of His terrible acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom, it was that the people might know how secure they are when trusting in Him.

The law is not against the promises of God. (Galatians 3:21) On the contrary, it is in full harmony with them, since it is a part of them. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jeremiah 31:33)

Therefore however great and terrible its requirements, we may "know that His commandment is life everlasting." (John 12:50)

Though its righteousness be so great that it can be fitly expressed only in a voice of thunder that shakes the earth, it is to all who believe His Word and His oath but a "joyful sound," because it makes known to us what great things God does for us. The Holy Spirit comes first with strong conviction of sin by the law, but even so He is only a comforter. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance." (Psalm 89:15)

Moses knew the joyful sound. To him the things of God were not idle tales, but they were realities. "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

So, trusting in God's promise and oath, he knew that no matter with how great a voice God spoke, He could speak only peace to His people. (Psalm 85:8) Therefore He drew near to the secret place of God, and was shut in with His glory. The Lord talked with him to face to face. "And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him." (Exodus 34:29,RV)

He was walking in the light of God's countenance, because he knew the joyful sound of the Gospel. He knew that in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed to those who believe, (Romans 1:16-17) and so he found the thundering mount to be a mount of blessing; the throne of glory was a throne of grace; the thunder of the law is but a joyful sound to those who accept the Gospel of the grace of God.

It was better that the people should have God speak to them through Moses, than that He should not speak to them at all. It was better that they should get some idea of the glory of God's face, by the reflection of it in the face of Moses, than that they should see no glory at all.

But it would have been much the best if they had been able to listen to God's own voice, and look upon His glory with unveiled face. And this would have been their privilege, if they had but believed as Moses did; for: "God is no respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34)

Instead of that, they could not endure even the glory that shone from the face of Moses, because "their minds were blinded." (2 Corinthians 3:14)

God's glory is His character. This is true in every sense of the word. The exceeding brightness that surrounds Him, and proceeds from Him, is from His righteousness. Man was "crowned with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:5) until he sinned, and then he came short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:2-3) The glory of the saints in the world to come will be but the shining forth of the righteousness of God which is in them by faith. This glory, which is but "the light of His countenance," is for all those who by faith in God's promise hear only a joyful sound even in the thunders of His law.

It is to such a joyful sound, because they know that it does not tell them what God requires them to try to do, but what He has sworn to do in them. "Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3)

Hearing the law in that way, they are able to behold the glory of the Lord, "with unveiled face, [and so,] reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)--Present Truth, March 5, 1896--Psalm 89:11-16.

Chapter 126

Psalm 90: A Sure Dwelling Place

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." (Psalm 90:1)

What the Lord always has been, He is still, for He changes not. Because He changes not, we are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)

If the Lord should change, should cast us out, and cease to be our dwelling place, we should cease to be; for only "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

But, "The Lord will not cast off for ever." (Lamentations 3:31)

Even though He chasten us, and cause grief, "Yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." (Lamentations 3:32)

His chastenings are in tender love, being only the washing and cleansing of the wounds that sin has made. He will not cast off, and no one can pluck us out of His bosom--our dwelling place.

We may, like prodigal sons, attempt to shake off home restraints, and chose to live independently, but we cannot succeed; for even the portion which we call our own, and which we squander, is His provision for us, and wander where we will, we are never out of the grasp of His loving, sustaining hand.

What a blessed, joyful assurance that He is "not far from every one of us!" (Acts 17:27)

Though we fly to the ends of the earth, or go into its depths, His salvation is near, for "all the ends of the earth," (Psalm 98:3) are called on to behold the salvation of our God. He saves with His right hand and His mighty, outstretched arm--the arm that encircles the universe. Then how easy it is

always to find salvation! "Surely His salvation is near them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land." (Psalm 85:9)

No matter how far we have wandered away, at no time need it take a minute to find ourselves safe in the sheltering bosom of the Father. Although no soul on earth is out of His hand, that is not our dwelling place. The soul can never find rest and peace while so far separated from God as to be merely in His hand.

It is in Him that we find peace in absolute union with Him, our whole soul, body, and spirit swallowed up in His. "In returning and rest shall you be saved." (Isaiah 30:15)

When our will is wholly lost in His, and we find our delight solely in Him, then shall the promise be fulfilled: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32:18)--Present Truth, September 5, 1901--Psalm 90:1.

Chapter 127

Psalm 90: Our Dwelling Place

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." (Psalm 90:1-4)

One of the most minute compositions ever penned, combining the loftiest and sublimest thought with language in the most simple and easily understood. Its rhythm makes it most easy to commit to memory, for it fastens itself in the mind without effort. It is not, however, as a literary production that we are to consider it, but as a comforting uplifting truth.

One thought that is vividly set forth in this passage is the fact that God is the Great Father of all;--not simply of all men, but of all things. This thought is expressed in the words, "Before the mountains were brought forth." (Psalm 90:2)

All know that the words "bring forth" are the equivalent of "bear" as applied to the bringing of young into the world, and are very frequent in the Scripture. The Hebrew word in this place is the word meaning "to bear, to bring forth," and several translations have the clause very literally and correctly rendered, "Before the mountains of were born."

The French of Segond, which is easy of access for verification, has it, "Avant que les montagnes fussent nés."

The thought is still further carried out in the remainder of the clause, "or ever formed the earth and the world," although here it is necessarily obscured in the translation. The word rendered "formed" is a Hebrew word meaning "to twist, to turn around," and hence "to writhe, to be in pain," and so "to travail, to bring forth," or, in the passive, "to be born."

In the following text, the words are from this same Hebrew word as the word "formed" in the text just quoted: "Look unto Abraham your father and the Sara that bore you." (Isaiah 51:2) "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth." (Proverbs 8:24-25) "Are you the first man that was born? or were you made before the hills?" (Job 15:7)

These last two texts indicate that the act is the same for both men and mountains. Among other instances of the same word, are: "Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord." (Isaiah 54:1) "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who has heard such a thing? who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." (Isaiah 66:7-8) "The voice of the Lord makes the hinds to calve, and discovers the forests: and in His temple does every one speak of His glory." (Psalm 29:9) "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5)

In the second verse we have the terms "the earth" and "the world," the first referring to the planet on which we dwell, and the second to the habitable earth--the population. It is so used in: "And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." (Psalm 9:8) "For He comes, for He comes to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." (Psalm 96:13) "For He comes to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." (Psalm 98:9)

The verse might therefore with strict propriety be rendered thus: "Before the mountains were born, or ever You had brought forth the earth and its people, even from eternity to eternity You are God."

This little study of words is certainly not so technical as to disturb anybody in his reading, and it is surely calculated to bring us consciously nearer to God, and to make His presence more real.

Jesus Christ is "the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15,RV)

This again shows the one common origin of all things animate and inanimate. Jesus was begotten of the Father before there was anything. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor thehighest part of the dust of the world." (Proverbs 8:22-26) "He is before all things." (Colossians 1:17)

He is the Only-begotten Son, without whom nothing was made. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3) "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist [or "hold together"]." (Colossians 1:16-17,RV)

Christ is "the everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6) of all creation, visible and invisible. There is but one family in heaven and earth, and all its members are named from Him. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," (Ephesians 3:14-15)

Even the inhabitants of this fallen world "are His offspring," although they are prodigal sons, wandering sheep; "For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2:11)

We are allied to the angels in heaven, yet we are in the closest family relation to the earth on which we tread, for we are but dust. "Out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." (Genesis 3:19)

So while on the one hand we may have the highest aspirations and the most confident hopes, on the other hand we have no more reason to be proud than the clod that is crushed by the plowman's boot. A proper appreciation of our origin would give to us the greatness of true humility.

God is. That is His name. He is the self-existent One. He is pure life, the Spirit of life. The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God, and: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6)

Christ as the everlasting Word, is "I AM." (John 8:58)

In Him is life, for He is "the life." (John 14:6)

In Him were all things created; from Him, from His very being, His life, all things came. That is why we have redemption through His blood--His life. In giving himself for us, He gives the life of the universe. Thus He renews our life, and we are born again. "What a wonderful Saviour!"--E. A. Hoffman, Hymn: What a Wonderful Saviour, 1891

That is our origin. What a broad and deep meaning this reveals in the words, "Our Father." God is more really our Father than is the man whose earthly name we bear. The relation between God and the whole human race, and to all creation as well, infinitely closer than that of earthly parents to their children. So the Lord says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." (Isaiah 66:13)

But His parental comfort is as much greater than that of any human mother, as He is greater than any human being. Earthly relationships, at their best, are not merely illustrations, but revelations, of the relation and love of God to mankind.

But we have not yet fathomed the depth of this scripture. Indeed, we have but just begun to explore it. We are bound to God by ties closer than that of any child to its mother. The love of a mother for her child is the highest known among men, but God's is infinitely greater. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." (Isaiah 49:15)

The child is formed of the very substance of the mother, and draws its life from her being; yet even for all that, the mother may forget and even hate her child; but God will not. Why not? Because: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

He is our dwelling place. The child, once born, can live independent of its mother, but we can never live apart from God. The mother may die the moment the child draws its first breath, and the child may still live the full term of life; but our life depends on God's life every moment. He is our life, and the length of our days. "For He is your life, and the length of your days." (Deuteronomy 30:20)

In Him we live. The relation of men to God, even down to gray hairs and throughout eternity, is that of the unborn child to its mother. From the very nature of things the mother cannot forget the creature that she carries beneath her heart, and which she nourishes with her own heart's blood. Its presence day and night is a constant claim upon her thought.

Moreover compassion is wrapped up in the thought, for the Hebrew word for "womb" means "compassion, mercy, pity." There are unnatural parents, it is true. He is the Parent of the whole human race, and every moment He carries us in His bosom. The only begotten Son "is in the bosom of the Father," (John 1:16) and we are in Him. What a safe and quiet dwelling place! How close and tender is our relation to the everlasting Father!

It is very easy for us to imagine that we have an existence apart from and independent of God, because we move about freely at our pleasure, and do not see any connection between us and God. That is because we have not our eyes open.

But the closest scrutiny does not in the least shake the statement that our relation to God is that of the unborn babe to its mother,--we are carried in His bosom, and nourished by His life. The child in embryo has a circulation of its own, as distinct as that of any living creature. The blood of the mother does not circulate through the child; it simply draws the life-giving property from the blood of the mother.

So although we have a complete circulation of blood in our bodies, we nevertheless draw all our life sustenance from the life--the blood--of the Lord. His heart is the heart of the universe. From Him flows the stream of life which keeps all creation in existence. The life is the blood; and by whatever means the life is conveyed to us, whether by the air, the sunlight, food, or drink, it is all some manifestation of the blood of Christ, which not only gives life, but which cleanses from sin.

Yes, God is our dwelling-place; never can we be separated from His being without being blotted from existence. So we may read with new wonder and fresh comfort the promise of God, "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 33:18)

How comforting to know that this sure dwelling place is "from everlasting to everlasting." When we read that a thousand years are to Him not merely as one day, but as a day gone by, and that we are but as nothing in comparison with His eternal greatness, it is not to belittle us, but to exalt Him, and to give us confidence. Happy the people who can say with the confidence of experience, "God is our refuge and strength." (Psalm 46:1)

In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart can fear;
And safe is such confiding.
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me;

And can I be dismayed?
--Anna L. Waring, Hymn: In Heavenly Love Abiding, 1850.

--Present Truth, October 12, 1899--Psalm 90:1-4.

Chapter 128

Psalm 90: The Longsuffering of God

In our study of this text last week (See: Psalm 90: Our Dwelling Place), which really covered only the first two verses, we saw something of God's greatness, and of our relation to Him. Great as men may be accounted in this world, they are always to the Lord only "little children." In comparison with Him they are indeed "less than nothing;" what a marvelous manifestation, therefore, of His love and grace, that He calls them His children. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are." (1 John 3:1,RV)

Yea, for whatever God calls anything, that it is. What a comfort to know that God carries us in His bosom, and that we are sharers of His life. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," (Acts 17:28) so that He cares for us even as for His own soul. God was in

Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and for us, "[Christ] poured out His soul unto death." (Isaiah 53:12)

God is love; His being is love; He is nothing but love; therefore His life is love. So as we live in Him, and His life flows through us unhindered, His love is thus shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is life, and whose first and chiefest attribute is love. So, "We love, because He first loved us," (1 John 4:19) for, "Love is of God." (1 John 4:7)

The recognition of this relationship, this intimate, vital connection between God and us, cannot but fill our hearts with love, not only for Him, but for all creatures and for all creation, with which, through Him, we stand so closely related.

How can we ever doubt His care? He cannot forget us, for every moment we are drawing upon His heart's blood. We are not far from Him, but in Him. Very tenderly He guards us, for whatever danger threatens us, threatens His own life. Surely there is every reason for us to love and trust God. "You turn

man to destruction, and say, Return, you children of men. For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." (Psalm 90:3-4)

Immediately the thought will arise in some minds as this is read, "That doesn't seem much like love and tenderness. It looks rather as though He petulantly casts men from Him, deliberately consigning them to destruction."

If it looks that way to us, it is only because we do not believe the first verse, which declares that He is our dwelling place in all generations. "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Psalm 90:1-2)

He is from everlasting to everlasting, and therefore to eternity He will still encircle us with His life of love. If we hold fast our confidence in God, all the difficulties in the way of understanding His Word will vanish.

Is it not strange that even professed Christians are ready to believe that God has put into His own Word statements that are derogatory to His character? He says that He is everlasting love, and: "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

If we truly believe Him, with no half-hearted trust, we shall find His tenderness revealed in what to the unbelieving mind seems indifference or even injustice.

Suppose we stop a little while with this statement, "You turn man to destruction," (Psalm 90:3) and see if it is really as severe a thing as it seems to us. We really ought to wait long before concluding that God casts men away from Him to destruction, with the current command, "Get you gone!"

Turning to the Hebrew we find that the word rendered "destruction" in our version is not a word that is ordinarily used in that sense, and is nowhere so defined. The idea is: "to break in pieces, to be small, to crush, to grind."

Before saying, "What is the difference?" let us turn to some other places in the Bible, where the same Hebrew word occurs. The italicized words in the following text are from the same Hebrew word as "destruction" in our text. "For thus says the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isaiah 57:15)

Read this verse in connection with Psalm 90:1-3, and note the similarity in thought. "They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I8 set before you and before your fathers." (Jeremiah 44:10)

From the word "humbled" we are referred to the margin, where we read, "Heb.: contrite." Again: "The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart, and saves such as be of a contrite spirit." (Psalm 34:18) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

And in the eighth verse of this Psalm we have: "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice." (Psalm 51:8)

These texts were translated by the same men who translated Psalm 90:3, so we have their testimony to the fact that "contrition," brokenness, is a proper rendering of the word which in this instance they have translated "destruction." We will therefore see what some other translators have done with the word.

The first translation we pick up is that of the Jewish Rabbi, Isaac Leser. It reads thus: "You turn man to contrition, and say, Return, you children of men."

The Septuagint has the same word that is found in Matthew 11, where Christ says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29)

It occurs also in: "God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us." (2 Corinthians 7:6)

And in: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." (James 1:9)

And also in: "[God] gives grace unto the humble;" (James 4:6) and in other similar instances. The Vulgate has humiliation, and humility, abasement. The German has a word indicating grinding. The Danish has it: "You deal with a man so that he becomes crushed."

The Norwegian, Swedish, and French translations each have it, "You cause [or command] man to return to dust."

From all these we are fully warranted in rendering verse 3: "You turn man to contrition and say, Return, you children of men."

Before we pass on from this study of the word, however, it will be profitable to stop a minute longer on the derivation of it. The word "contrition" is from two Latin words meaning "to grind together." The latter part of the word is the word "triturate," which is what the chemist does to the medicines which he puts into his mortar. He triturates them with a pestle.

"Con" (co) means "together." The word "contrition" is thus an exact equivalent of the Hebrew word, which, as before noted, means: "to break in pieces, to be small, to crush, to grind."

When the drugs are triturated or ground in the mortar they become fine dust, and so we have the other renderings already noted.

Our translators evidently concluded that this turning to dust was the end of the man, and so they rendered it "destruction." But it is a blessed truth that God, who in the beginning made man of the dust of the ground, and can turn him back to dust again, not for the purpose of destroying him, but of making a new man of him.

The word return, means, "turn again." We have another very familiar word which has the same meaning, and that is "convert." So the Vulgate carries out the thought completely, in rendering, "Ne avertas hominem un humilitatem, et divisti: convertimini filii hominum." (Psalm 90:3)

That is, "Verily You turn man to abasement, and say, Be converted, sons of men."

Man was made of dust, but we are all apt to forget our origin, and so, in our self-exaltation take ourselves out of and away from God, who is lowly; therefore God, knowing that there is no hope for us away from Him, kindly takes measures to humble as, to abase us into the dust again, saying, "Come back, be converted, made new."

Can you not now begin to see the joy and comfort that there is in the text? It may seem that this turning back to dust is really death and destruction, but that is only because: "You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons." (Hebrews 12:5-8)

God wounds only to heal. "Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." (Lamentations 3:32-33)

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, begins His work of consolation by using His sword upon us.

Every trial draws Him nearer;
Peace, peace is mine!
All His strokes but make Him dearer,
Peace, peace is mine!
Bless I then the hand that smites
Gently, and to heal delights.

'Tis against my sins He fights,
Peace, peace is mine!
-- J. Denham Smith, Hymn: Peace, Peace is Mine.

What a blessed thing to know that our God can make a good, new man out of dust. Indeed, dust is the only material out of which a man can be made. As soon as man forgets that he is dust, he becomes bad, and God is obliged to take measures to turn him to dust again, so that he can be reformed, made over. The grinding process is not pleasant at the time, for: "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11)

With what equanimity and even joy we can meet all the seeming ills of life when we know this, and remember also that nothing comes to us except from the hand of God. If we are even insulted and humiliated by one who wishes us evil, we can count it all joy, knowing that: "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Everything that wounds or presses us, every deprivation or pain, is only to keep us mindful of the fact that we are nothing but dust, that we may be great only in God's meekness. "With your meekness You have made me great." (Psalm 18:35,margin)

But we have not yet finished. We come to the fourth verse of our psalm and notice that it begins with "for." God brings us to contrition, and calls us to be made new, because a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday. What is the force of this? Ah, we remember that there is another place where we are told that a thousand years with God is as one day, and we look it up. It is: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:8)

The Lord is patient with His wayward children, who, so blind to their own safety, obstinately insist on taking themselves out of His loving embrace. He does not cast them off; He does not say, "Let them go, if they will."

But He is longsuffering with them, and that longsuffering means their salvation. He is not willing that any should perish, and so He bears long with their blind stubbornness. His goodness is the only thing that leads any to repentance.

God inhabits eternity, therefore He can afford to wait. He is even patient when the very men whom He is waiting to save taunt Him with His longsuffering, saying that His delay is an evidence that He has forgotten His promise. But He never forgets. How can He, when everything and all time is always present with Him? All things are in Him. He bears them in His heart, and can no more forget any creature than He can forget His own life.

The thousands of years that have passed since God promised the restoration of all things are but as yesterday, even like one of the short watches of the night, during which men sleep. "This God is our God for ever." (Psalm 48:14) "Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord." (Psalm 33:12)

Therefore will we say, even in the midst of chastisement and affliction, "Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." (Psalm 116:7)--Present Truth, October 19, 1899--Psalm 90:1-4.

Chapter 129

Psalm 90: The Light of His Countenance

"You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of your countenance." (Psalm 90:8)

Is this a matter for joy, or for sorrow? for gladness, or for despondency? Doubtless the most of those who read it do so with a feeling of fear and dread. The thought that all their sins are open before God, makes them tremble, and they wish to forget it.

They cannot get over the idea that God is a stern, implacable tyrant, ever watching to find some sin to charge up against His creatures. And so in their minds they picture God as keeping a stern eye on those sins, in order that He may exact penance for every one of them. This is judging God by man; it is making Him altogether such a one as themselves.

But we are assured that: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

Therefore it must be that there is hope and comfort in the text first quoted. Let us see what is the result of God's setting our secret sins in the light of His countenance, for the Scriptures have much to tell us about it.

The Shining of His Face

First let us take that wonderful blessing that God commanded Aaron and his sons to pronounce upon the children of Israel: "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 you peace." (Numbers 6:24-25)

So there is grace in the shining of the face of the Lord. And what does grace do? The grace of God brings salvation. "For the grace of God that

brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11) "By grace are you saved." (Ephesians 2:9) "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7) "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21)

So in the shining of the Lord's face there is forgiveness and salvation--eternal life.

Removal of Sin

Further, there is peace in the lifting up of the countenance upon us. Peace is the opposite of enmity and strife. Sin is enmity. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7)

Therefore the giving of peace is the taking away of sin, and the bestowing of righteousness. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight." (Colossians 1:21-22) "For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, ... That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Ephesians 2:14-15)

So in the lifting up of God's countenance upon us there is the taking away of sin, and the giving of righteousness. The Psalmist said: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" (Psalm 4:6)

And he immediately furnished the reply, by saying, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." (Psalm 4:6)

The light of the Lord's countenance brings good. Therefore when our secret sins are set in the light of His countenance, His goodness comes to take their place. And so, when sin was oppressing the Psalmist's soul, he

said, "Why are you cast down O my soul? and why are you disquieted in me? hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." (Psalm 42:5)

Practical Help

The practical help afforded by the light of the Lord's countenance is thus set forth: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old. How You did drive out the heathen with your hand, and planted them; how You did afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because You had a favor unto them." (Psalm 44:1-3)

Read again of the blessings that come with the light of God's countenance: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne; mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength." (Psalm 89:14-17)

So we see that when the Lord makes His face to shine upon us, mercy and truth are in the glance. His mercy puts His truth in the inward parts of those who walk in the light of His countenance.

Daniel's Prayer

When the chosen people were captives in Babylon, and their city and temple were in ruins, the prophet Daniel set his face to seek the Lord by prayer and supplications, confessing his sin and the sin of his people, and said, "O Lord, according to all your righteousness, I beseech You, let your anger and your fury be turned away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of your servant, and his

supplications, and cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline your ear, and hear; open your eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by your name; for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousnesses, but for your great mercies." (Daniel 9:16-18)

The shining of the Lord's face upon His sanctuary, would be its restoration; His looking upon His people's desolations, would be their deliverance; so when God sets our iniquities before Him, it means forgiveness; and the light of His countenance upon our secret sins will take them all away. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up your strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause your face to shine; and we shall be saved." (Psalm 80:1-3)

And the promise is, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2)

His Glory is His Goodness

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84:11)

The Lord is a God of glory; but His glory is His goodness. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

But for their sin, they would not have come short of His glory; so that the perfect righteousness of God is His glory. And therefore when He gives His Spirit to strengthen His people against sin, and to lead them in the paths of righteousness, it is "according to the riches of His glory." (Ephesians 3:16)

His grace brings salvation; but when that has been accomplished, and the saints shine with the glory of God, through the ages to come, the glory with

which they shine will simply reveal "the exceeding riches of His grace." (Ephesians 2:7)

And this is how it is done: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) "God is a sun." (Psalm 84:11)

His light and glory are seen in Christ, who is "the Sun of righteousness." (Malachi 4:2)

As the sun shines upon the earth, and causes it to bring forth fruit, and brings life and health and gladness, so the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, shines in the hearts of men to cause righteousness and praise to spring forth. "For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." (Ephesians 5:9,RV)

No Partiality

But God is not partial in His favors. He is no respecter of persons. When we are exhorted to: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to themthat hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Matthew 5:44) the reason given is "That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matthew 5:45)

The sun shines as brightly upon the fields of the infidel as upon those of the Christian. "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof." (Psalm 19:6)

Thus it is with God. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." (Titus 2:11)

Or, as in the Revision, "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." (Titus 2:11)

There is not a soul on earth upon whom the sunlight of God's grace does not shine. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. ... God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:20,8)

And, "He died for all." (2 Corinthians 5:15)

By the grace of God, "[He] tasted death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

In the judgment it will appear that upon every man has the glory of God's grace shone, more than sufficient to take away all sin.

The Veil of Unbelief

The question will be asked: "Then why will not all be saved, if the Sun of righteousness shines upon all, and there is salvation in the light of His countenance?"

The answer is at hand. Read the words of the Apostle Paul: "Having therefore such a hope, we use great plainness of speech, And are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away; But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted; which veil is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. But whensoever it or man shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:12-18,RV)

After the Lord had spoken the law to the people, He called Moses up into the mount to receive it. Moses was with the Lord forty days and forty nights. When he came down to talk with the people, they were afraid to come near him, because his face shone so brightly, although he himself did not know it. So he had to put a veil on while he talked with them; but when he returned to

talk with God he took it off, and talked with the Lord with unveiled face. (See Exodus 34:29-35)

It is from this circumstance that the apostle draws the lesson. Note the following points.

1. The mount upon which the Lord descended could not be approached by the people; to touch it was death. Yet Moses ascended it in safety.

2. The people could not look upon the face of Moses, because of the glory of God which it reflected, yet Moses talked with the Lord with unveiled face.

Why this difference? It was not any difference in constitution, nor because God was partial to Moses, but because Moses had faith, and they had not. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

But their minds were blinded; and blindness of mind is unbelief. If they had taken the veil of unbelief off from their hearts, they could have beheld the reflected glory of God in the face of Moses, as well as he could behold the glory more directly. Indeed, they could have beheld the same glory that he did, and their faces would have shone also.

So we see that while the face of the Lord is shedding glorious beams of grace upon all the people of the earth, many receive none of its life-giving warmth, because they cover themselves with a veil of unbelief.

Faith is Humility

Still further; unbelief is self-exaltation, but faith is humility. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4)

Humility acknowledges Him as all-wise, all-powerful, and allrighteous. It acknowledges that He alone is good. It says with the prophet, "O Lord,

righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us confusion of face, ... because we have sinned against You." (Daniel 9:7-8)

Faith always means humility of heart, and confession of sin. Unbelief always exalts self, and refuses to acknowledge sin. So unbelief is a veil that covers up sin. "He that covers his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

Unbelief covers them, but faith in the mercy of God acknowledges them, and lets the light of His countenance shine upon them to take them away. The glory of the Lord will always consume sin. It is true that for a time men may seem to conceal it, but when the Lord comes, "[He] will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

Then all the wicked, who have exalted themselves against God, shall be consumed with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8) The glory of the Lord will utterly consume all sin, and those who have kept it covered in their own hearts until that time, and have held it as a part of themselves, will be consumed with it.

But those who by acknowledging it, have disavowed it, and have laid it open to the light of His countenance, find salvation in the glory of the Lord.

The wicked will call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them, to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne; (Revelation 6:16) while the righteous, when His glory shall be revealed, will "be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:13)

Therefore let us heed the exhortation: "Seek the Lord, and His strength; seek His face ever more." (Psalm 105:4) "When You said, Seek my face; my heart said unto You, your face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27:8) "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His

pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock." (Psalm 27:4-5)--Present Truth, April 6, 1893--Psalm 90:8.

Chapter 130

Psalm 90: In the Light of His Countenance

"You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of your countenance." (Psalm 90:8)

How many have thought that the Lord was holding them there against us, over our heads, and have found no comfort in this word of the Lord? But the prophet testifies of the Lord: "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Habakkuk 1:13)

Then when He sets our sins before His face, that iniquity is gone, consumed by the glory of the Lord. In the light of His countenance there is health and righteousness. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength: and in your favor our horn shall be exalted." (Psalm 89:15-17)

That light dispels sin, just as the light of the same glory in the sunlight purifies a dark unhealthful place, and destroys the germs of disease.--Present Truth, March 1, 1894--Psalm 90:8.

Chapter 131

Psalm 90: Has God Arbitrarily Limited Man's Age?

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:10)

These words are quite generally regarded by readers of the Bible as teaching that the Creator has positively fixed seventy years as the limit of man's age, with a penalty of labor and sorrow for those whose strength enables them to overstep the bonds by a few years.

The text is well known, and so firmly fixed in the popular mind is the idea that the age of man is limited by a divine decree just as surely as is the length of the year, that those who talk about living a hundred years or more are looked upon as hopelessly endeavoring to overturn the order of creation.

Now if the text in question does teach that God has fixed the length of human life, limiting it to seventy years, then it is evident that to attempt to extend the period of man's life would be both foolish and wicked. But all the evidence goes to show that no such limit has been set.

We find, as a matter of fact, that very many do live much longer than seventy years, in the possession of health and strength, and that without any thought of transgressing divine decrees. If it be said that these are but exceptions, and that enough more die before seventy to bring the average down, it must be replied that by far the majority of mankind die long before seventy, and that at the present time the average age of the human race can scarcely be one-half that stated by the psalmist. How, then, shall we understand the text?

The answer is plain: Understand the text just as it reads. It simply states the fact that at the time it was written the average age of man was threescore and ten years. It does not say, nor does it intimate, that God ever fixed the

limit of man's age at seventy years. Indeed, evidence to the contrary is furnished by the writer of the psalm in question.

The psalm is "a prayer of Moses, the man of God," who at the age of fourscore (80) was just beginning his lifework, and whose "eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," (Deuteronomy 34:7) at the age of six-score (120) years. Caleb, one of the associates of Moses, successfully carried on difficult military enterprises, involving severe bodily exercise and exposure, at the age of eightyfive, and was as vigorous and athletic at that age as when he was forty. Moses was not writing his own experience, but was merely telling how it was with the majority of man.

When God called Israel out of Egypt by Moses, it was His design that their days should "be long upon the land," (Exodus 20:12) which he was giving them. "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." (1 Corinthians 10:5)

He gave them the bread of life and the water of life, and was justly disappointed and grieved when they died, many of them undoubtedly at what would now be called a "ripe old age," since it was not the young who perished, but those who were adults when they left Egypt.

The record of so many who lived to be much more than a hundred years old, and the absence of any decree arbitrarily limiting man's age, are proof that God has placed no obstacle in the way of man's living, but the contrary.

It is not true that God endows each person at his birth with a certain "store of vitality," varying in quantity in each case, and that when that store is used up the person must die. That would indeed be "respect of persons," and contrary to God's character.

God's mercies, which preserve us from being consumed, "are new every morning." "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

For each day as it comes God gives the strength necessary for the day, and our length of life depends solely on our appropriation of these mercies. His law is life, and all who walk in His law have the promise of life, both that which now is and that which is to come. "For bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)--Medical Missionary, August 1905--Psalm 90:10.

Chapter 132

Psalm 91: The Christian's Outlook

"He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

This is the dwelling-place of every true Christian; for God has Christ, and "has raised us up together in Christ Jesus;" (Ephesians 2:6) and in that we are made alive in Christ, and raised to the heavenly places in Him, we are placed "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion." (Ephesians 1:21)

The King in His Beauty

From this elevated position the Christian has a broad outlook. First of all, he sees the King in His beauty.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me." (Psalm 27:4-6)

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High must necessarily see the Lord. God is the one great object in the Christian's horizon, and it is this continual view that ensures his safety. "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not the moved." (Psalm 16:8)

With the Lord always before him, he cannot fail to obey this injunction: "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9) "We all, open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

None of this language is figurative; it is literal and real. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God," (Matthew 5:8) not only in the future, but now; for nothing but impurity can shut out God from the right. Wherever there is purity of heart and life, there is the vision of God. His glory is to be seen in the heavens, while every flower reveals some of His beauty. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Psalm 33:5)

Walking in the Light

And therefore the one whose eyes are opened has all the goodness of the Lord continually passing before him. For the Christian's eyes are opened, Christ is the light of the world, and God "has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." (Colossians 1:13)

Those who have fellowship with God, "walk in the light, as He is in the light," (1 John 1:7) so that we can say, "Whereas I was blind, not I see;" (John 9:25) for, "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind." (Psalm 146:8)

And with his opened eyes the Christian sees "wondrous things" in the law of God. (Psalm 119:18) The law is magnified and honorable in his eyes, for he sees it as "the perfect law of liberty," (James 1:25) the life of Jesus Christ. What more glorious outlook could anybody have than this, to behold God and His salvation? for of the one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, it is said, "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:16)

It could not be otherwise, since God is his salvation. The Christian, therefore, beholds the arm of the Lord revealed, the arm that brings salvation,--and he rests in Him.

All Things New

From his safe retreat in the Lord, the Christian looks out upon the earth; and, having been made a new creature, he sees everything with new eyes. He

that sits upon the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

And He begins with the man who abides in Him: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Looking beyond that which to the mere physical eye seems to be all there is, he sees all things transformed, and tastes even here the power and the joy of the world to come. In every stream of pure water, in every shower of rain, and in every sparkling dewdrop, he sees. "[The] pure river of water of life, clear as crystal." (Revelation 22:1)

What matters it to him if others say that they can see nothing? He whose eyes are opened must needs be a seer, and the universe of God will reveal to him wonders that are hidden from those who "have eyes, but they see not." (Jeremiah 5:21)

He has in earth a heaven in which to go to heaven. Someone may object to the statement that the Christian can see the river of life, saying that is spiritual. Very well, we have the assurance that: "the things of the Spirit of God ... are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

And, further, "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Romans 8:9)

God himself is a spiritual being, yet He is revealed to the pure in heart, to the one who is spiritual. As to seeing the water of life, we have in it a daily illustration of how people can have eyes and can look directly at an object, and not see it. Read the following: "You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it with the river of life; which is full of water; You prepare them corn, when You have so provided for it. You water the ridges thereof abundantly; You settle the furrows thereof; You make it soft with showers; You bless the springing thereof; You crown the year with your goodness; and your paths drop fatness." (Psalm 65:9-11)

There is nothing good that does not come directly from God, and He does not keep any good thing back from us. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17)

The rain that falls from heaven, enriching the earth and making it fruitful, is the overflowing water of life from the throne of God, and it comes to us laden with God's own righteousness.

"Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it." (Isaiah 45:8)

All may see it as such, if they are dwelling in the secret place of God, the place whence the water of life springs. God does not reserve the sight of His glories for a select and specially favored few; but He spreads them out in full view of everybody, so that whether or not anyone sees them depends wholly on himself. Whoever walks in the Spirit can daily see wonders that are hidden from the eyes of the one who has only the mind of the flesh.

Seeing God's Salvation

The Christian, having God continually before him, sees the power of God, which saves; "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." (Romans 1:20,RV)

Thus it is that he sees the salvation of God. Everything that is made, even his own body, reveals the personal presence of the Divine Word that upholds all things, so that he sees victory written on every blade of grass and every leaf of the forest; upon every flower, and in every star. So he is glad through the works of the Lord, and triumphs in the works of God's hands. (Psalm 92:4)

Still more, the one who dwells with God, sees His ways, and learns how to live. "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

So, instead of going about feeble in body and mind, the Christian has before him the prospect of renewed youth and fresh, joyous life, which, beginning now, will continue without interruption throughout eternity. Surely, no outlook could be more pleasing and encouraging than this.

Everybody who has ever been ill--and how few there are who have not suffered more or less from disease--knows how dark is the outlook when the vitality is low. It cannot be otherwise, even though one hopes in God for a final release from pain. But God provides for a glorious view, and invites us to enjoy the reality of it here and now. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:2-4)

God wishes all of His children to be healthy and happy, and He provides the manna to that end.

Deliverance From Trouble

If the Christian looks ahead, he sees before him a time of trouble such as never was, when plagues and pestilence--the out-breaking of the plague that is in the hearts of all who have not turned to the Lord--will ravage the land; but in that time of trouble he sees deliverance for "every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel 12:1)

Though a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, he has no fear that any plague will come near him. Where others see nothing but darkness, he sees only light, "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shines." (1 John 2:8)

In short, the Christian,--"Looking unto Jesus," (Hebrews 12:2) "the fullness of Him that fills all in all," (Ephesians 1:23) "in whom all things consist," (Colossians 1:17) and beholding God, "who is over all, and through all, and in all," (Ephesians 4:6) sees only perfection, for his eyes are turned away from beholding vanity. (Psalm 119:37) He beholds Christ crucified before him, (Galatians 3:1) and glories in the cross, by which the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. (Galatians 6:14)

He sees the new creation in the cross, and knows no man after the flesh; (2 Corinthians 5:16) so he begins the life everlasting, living in this world just as he will continue to live throughout eternity, for he lives now in the secret place of God, (Psalm 91:1) as close to Him as he can possibly be. Taking refuge under the shadow of God's wings, (Psalm 57:1) he sees light in God's light, (Psalm 36:9) and drinks continually from the river of God's Eden, (Psalm 36:8) for Eden means pleasure. "How excellent is your lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of your house; and You shall make them drink of the river of your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:7-9)

And so, with Christ and His power and goodness filling the whole range of our vision, we look forward with glad anticipation to the time when we shall see Him come to the clouds of heaven, even as He left this earth; (Acts 1:11) for we shall behold His face in the righteousness which He imparts, and shall be satisfied with His likeness. "As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." (Psalm 17:15)--Present Truth, January 24, 1901--Psalm 91:1.

Chapter 133

Psalm 91: In the Secret Place

"He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

The Almighty dwells "in the secret place," and He "sees in secret"; (Matthew 6:4) hence: "He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness; and the light dwells with Him," (Daniel 2:22) because, "God is light." (1 John 1:5) "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13)

This would be a terrible bit of knowledge to us, fearful to contemplate, if it were not for the knowledge that God looks with kindlier eyes than man. He is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," (Habakkuk 1:13) and evil shall not dwell with Him; (Psalm 5:4) so if we only choose the light of His countenance (Psalm 90:8) it will cleanse us from secret faults, (Psalm 19:12) so that none will remain to be seen. And then we have on the other hand the wonderful assurance that: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14)

He that dwells in secret, and sees in secret, and works in secret, is able to make known deep and secret things. So with gladness we may ever remember that: "You, God, see me." (Genesis 16:13)--Present Truth, July 30, 1903--Psalm 91:1.

Chapter 134

Psalm 91: That They Might Know Him

"He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God;in Him will I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)

What a blessed thing it is to have a sure refuge, a safe dwelling place--a place where one can enjoy perfect liberty!

The King's Declaration and Oath may be abolished without "the religions liberty which we have so long enjoyed" being in any wise "imperiled or curtailed," as so many fear. He who has made the Most High his habitation "shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." (Psalm 112:7)

The Sabbath--the very day which ancient Israel kept, and for neglecting which they were punished--was for the purpose of revealing God. He says, "I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12)

And again: "Hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God." (Ezekiel 20:20)

God never does anything in vain; therefore since He gave the Sabbath to men in order that by it they might know Him, it is evident that they who disregard it deprive themselves of the highest knowledge and closest acquaintanceship with Him. "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning." (Proverbs 1:5)

Since the way to add to learning is to hear, that is the way to begin the acquisition of it. To what shall we listen? To the Word of God; "For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

Absolute knowledge can be gained only by hearing and heeding the Word of God; for: "In [Him] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3)

The tendency of man is to push out for himself--to carry on "independent investigations," and to "create thought"; but "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Corinthians 3:20)

Nothing is knowledge, unless it is true, and truth is known only through the revelation of Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)--Present Truth, June 13, 1901--Psalm 91:1-2.

Chapter 135

Psalm 91: Tired of Life

"Tired of life."

Such is one of the prominent headings in a recent morning paper, under which the "suicidal maniac" is discussed. It is a sad comment on modern life, that so many people seem so anxious to get rid of it. It is an unhealthy and unnatural state, for love of life is the natural condition of all who have life.

How differently the Bible speaks of life. Read the promise of God to the one who sets his love upon Him:

"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:16)

Your life is represented as something most desirable, and the greatest promise God can make men is that He will bestow life without end.

Read some of the statements of the inducement which God holds out to men: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Revelation 21:6) "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Life is the one thing to be desired. How is it then that so many grow tired of it? The Bible furnishes the answer. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

The sinner is represented as carrying about with him a hateful "body of death." (Romans 7:24) "He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5:12)

Those who commit suicide because, as they say, they are "tired of life," do not really know what life is. They are tired of death, and wish to end consciousness of it.

With God is the fountain of life. He is life. Only he who loves God loves life. But in His presence there is fullness of joy. Therefore he who loves the Lord finds life a joy, and not a burden. "The joy of the Lord is his strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

No Christian ever becomes weary of life. Even though he may suffer tribulation and persecution, that only brings Christ the closer, and in the midst of affliction he rejoices for the very joy of living. "O taste and see that the Lord is good," (Psalm 34:8) and you will find, not a burden, but a "blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm 133:3)--Present Truth, August 24, 1893--Psalm 91:16.

Chapter 136

Psalm 92: God's Faithfulness at Night

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto your name, O most High: To shew forth your lovingkindness in the morning, and your faithfulness every night." (Psalm 92:1-2)

The Scriptures tell us that it is a good thing to show forth God's faithfulness every night.

Every one who has had any experience in that line can testify that it is indeed a good thing to know God's faithfulness at night. It is good to know in the silent night, when unseen dangers are around, and the pestilence may be walking abroad, that God's faithfulness remains unchanged.

And what is this faithfulness? God's faithfulness is shown in the forgiveness of sins; for we read: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever." (Psalm 103:9)

He tells us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath; (Ephesians 4:26) and so we may with confidence come to Him at evening time, expecting that all the sins of the day will be forgiven.

It is this separation of our sins from us, by the faithfulness of God, that gives calm confidence in the darkest night. "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for You, Lord, only make me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8)--Present Truth, January 15, 1903--Psalm 92:1-2.

Chapter 137

Psalm 92: Our Victory

The wicked glory in their own works, and their triumphs are but the precursors of their overthrow; but the righteous find no cause of glory in themselves. They have no confidence in the flesh, but all their confidence is in God.

The Psalmist, in setting forth the beauty of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, exclaims: "For You, Lord, have made me glad through your works; I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:4)

The Psalmist recognized that there was no occasion of triumph for him or any man in any other works than the works of God. And therefore, since men glory only in that which they regard as a triumph, his only occasion of glory was in the works of God, and he ascribed to God all the glory, and took none of it to himself. And so is it with all the righteous.

But far different is it with the man who has not faith. He neither sees the hand of God in that which befalls him, nor is he able to discern between victory and defeat. In his ignorance he is compared to the brutes that pass unwittingly to the slaughter. "O Lord, how great are your works! and your thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knows not, neither does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." (Psalm 92:5-7)

What a terrible significance is given to the prosperity of the wicked, and how far are all their imaginations from such a truth. Being destitute of faith, he cannot see beyond the present hour, and his pride goes before his fall. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

Yet there is nothing more common among men, or more natural to human nature, than to triumph in the works of the flesh and give praise and glory to

self. All the works of the flesh are against the works of the Lord, and therefore no real triumph can ever attend them.

And because they are against the Lord, they are against His people. "The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth." (Psalm 37:12)

They will oppress the just and rule over them and persecute them, and because of the prosperity of their wicked devices they imagine that their power has caused them to triumph; but the very triumph of the wicked are defeats, while the seeming defeats of the just are their victories. For we read that: "The prosperity of fools shall slay them." (Proverbs 1:32)

But neither persecution, nor distress, or even death in any of its forms can bring defeat upon the righteous, for, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)

The victory of the saints is not always made manifest in the things of this world, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

And the weapons of their warfare are "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

Their weapon is: "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

And their victory is the victory of faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)

God works with their faith, and in the works of His hands there is always triumph.--Present Truth, July 12, 1894--Psalm 92:4-7.

Chapter 138

Psalm 92: Cedars which the Lord Planted

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon." (Psalm 92:12)

Among the famous trees of the world, the cedars of Lebanon occupy a prominent place. The Scriptures have made the name a familiar one, even to those who have never seen the tree growing.

Yet a lack of knowledge of the characteristics of this noble creation of God keeps many from deriving all the comfort they should from the likeness of it to the righteous.

To most people the words convey no idea beyond the mere fact that God's people are likened to a tree of some sort. A little study of it will serve to make the Scripture comparison more vivid to our minds.

It is a very common thing in Scripture for people to be likened to trees, and even called trees; so when the likeness is to particular trees, as the palm tree and the cedar, we may be sure that some special feature is designed to be made prominent.

The very name of the cedar tree is significant. The Hebrew name is derived from a root meaning compact, firm, applied specially to a tree that has firm roots. The English word cedar, which is only the Greek name (kedros) transferred, is undoubtedly derived from the Arabic kedr, worth or value, or from kadrat, strong. Thus the name is descriptive, since the roots of the cedar are very strong.

The power of the roots may be gauged by the top, it being doubtless well known that the underground branches of a tree practically correspond in extent to those above. The diameter of the area covered by the branches of the cedar is sometimes nearly twice the height of the tree; so it will be seen that the roots must be very strong, and must have an exceedingly firm hold

on the sod, to keep the tree from being blown down by the fierce gales that sweep the mountain sides where it grows. Even so it is with the righteous: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." (Psalm 92:13)

The righteous "shall not be moved for ever. ... He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." (Psalm 112:6-7)

The winds of adversity and the storms of persecution may beat upon him, but they cannot overthrow the one who is "rooted and built up" in Christ, "and established in the faith." (Colossians 2:7) He is like the cedar of Lebanon, "steadfast immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

This last likeness is not far-fetched, nor is the scripture inapplicable; for the cedar has abounded in the work of the Lord. From the durability of the wood it was of old in demand for building, and it was the principal timber used in the building of Solomon's temple. So the children of God, His temples, are to be enduring.

Lamartine tells us that the Arabs regard the cedar trees as endowed with the principles of continued existence, and with reasoning and prescient powers, which enable them to prepare for the changes of the seasons. So indeed they have, yet not of themselves, but from the life of God, which makes them what they are; and even so it is with God's human temples. The life of God in them preserves them from destruction, and makes them prudent and: "The prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself." (Proverbs 22:3)

The following paragraph from an article by an old-time writer on "The Magic of Nature," serves to justify the idea of the Arabs just referred to: "The provision made by nature to defend the cedars of Lebanon from the heavy snows which fall upon the mountain, is among the convincing proofs of a protecting Providence with which the vegetable creation abounds. The branches of the tree, which is of great magnitude, shoot out horizontally at equal distances, in rows from the base to the top of the tree; the branches

would inevitably be crushed by the weight of the snow, were it not that, when winter is setting in, and all through the severe season, they change their position, and, becoming erect, embrace the body of the tree, and thus prevent the snows from resting upon them."

The timber-work of Cordova Cathedral, built eleven hundred years ago, is composed of cedar, as are the roofs of many other ancient buildings; so we need not wonder that Pliny said that the wood of the cedar is everlasting. Even so, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." (Psalm 112:6)

What else could be expected than that they who "are built together for a habitation" (Ephesians 2:22) for the everlasting God should themselves be enduring as eternity?

But the wood of the cedar is not merely enduring in its nature: it has the property of preserving other objects. The oil of cedar, distilled from the wood, was used by the ancients for preserving their books from moths and damp; and even now drawers of cedar, or chips of the wood, are employed to protect furs and woolen stuffs from injury by moths.

Thus it is with the righteous. The presence of a single righteous man has often saved the lives of many people who knew not the Lord nor the way of salvation. But more than this; the man who is filled with the Spirit of life from God must unconsciously diffuse that life, and impart it to others. The odor of his righteousness pervades his associates, so that, unless they put up a barrier between themselves and him, they will through his influence become like him.

This preservative, cleansing power was symbolized in the ceremony of purification from leprosy and other uncleanness. "Cedar wood and scarlet and hyssop" were used for sprinkling the blood and the water of separation upon the one to be cleansed. (Leviticus 14)

This may teach us that, as the righteous are like the cedar, they are to be used by the Lord in His great work of salvation. Being saved, men are used to save others. To all who believe, God's people are "a savor of life," (2

Corinthians 2:16) even as Christ himself; for they are sent in His stead, commissioned to do His work; and, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17) "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)--Present Truth, October 17, 1901--Psalm 92:12-13.

Chapter 139

Psalm 92: The Palm Tree

There is probably no other tree that exists in greater variety, and that is more beautiful and stately in every variety, than the palm tree. Moreover, it is as useful as it is beautiful. From the different species of palm an abundance of different kinds of delicious and nourishing food is obtained, and from its leaves and fibers are manufactured clothing and dwellings for men.

Because it is one of the most perfect of trees, it is used as a symbol of a righteous man. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish inthe courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat andflourishing; To show that the Lord is upright." (Psalm 92:12-15)

They will be upright as the palm tree, to show the uprightness of the God who dwells in them.

It is said of the palm tree that: "It will not be pressed or bound downward, or grow crooked, though heavy weights be laid on it."

This is the case with the real Christian, who, though cast down, is not destroyed, and who cannot be bound down by any chain that Satan can forge.

The palm is one of the most symmetrical of trees. A perfect tree of any kind is always symmetrical, but the palm seems, more than any other tree, to be superior to circumstances. In this it is the picture of the righteous man, who walks in the light, and as the light shines equally all round him, grows equally toward the light in every direction, because he eagerly takes in every ray of light. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;" (Psalm 92:14)

The palm tree, like all other trees, never ceases to grow, and never outlives its usefulness. Even so with the true Christian: he never ceases to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

The palm tree has abundant fatness, but it is not gross in appearance. It is always lithe and slim. Its fatness is in the fruit that it yields. Even so should it be with men.

People in general have a faulty idea of fatness. They think that it means abundance of adipose tissue, and this ability to tip the scale at a high figure. So they will praise the looks of a fat person, even though that person be dull of perception, and sluggish in movement.

The palm tree has fatness, but it does not store it up for itself, but gives it off for the benefit of man. So the fatness of the child of God, who lives continually in the Father's house, is not obesity, but is constantly given off for the service of others.

He always gives, yet never lacks. He is always laboring, yet never worn out. This comes, not naturally, but from Christ, who is the tree of life, the model and mainspring of the life of all His people.--Present Truth, August 2, 1900--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 92:12-15.

Chapter 140

Psalm 93: Lord of the Sea

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up theirvoice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm 93:3-4)

Here is a grandeur and majesty in the sea. Mountains represent strength, unchangeableness, but the sea, or a rushing river, represents irresistible forces. One is conscious of a power in the sea even when it is comparatively at rest; but when it rages, and its billows roar and show their contempt of puny man in the blinding spray that they spit forth, its fury is awful.

The helplessness of man and the most mighty structures that he can build,--great ships,--in the grasp of the sea, is thus vividly portrayed: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." (Psalm 107:23-27)

That is the first part of the story. The rest is this: "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." (Psalm 107:28-29)

This God can do, because: "The sea is His, and He made it, and His hands formed the dry land." (Psalm 95:5) "He measures all the waters in the hollow of His hand." (Psalm 95:12)

All the mighty power of the sea is borrowed from God. He both stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar, and also stills their roaring.

This is a reason why men should be humble, and should consent to be wholly guided by the Lord, to the one who talks proudly and foolishly in

self-confidence, the Lord says: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, And broke up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shall you come, but no further: and here shall your proud waves be stayed?" (Job 38:8-11)

Great as is the power of the sea, God's power is infinitely greater. The sea is to Him but as a new-born infant in the swaddling clothes. Just as the one would hush a boisterous child, so the Lord says to the raging sea, "Peace! be still," (Mark 4:39) and immediately it obeys Him. It recognizes His authority. It can never overstep the bounds which He sets for it.

Surely, then, man, who is so helpless when seized upon by the billows, and whose mightiest ships are tossed by its waves as mere toys, ought to fear and worship Him to whom its raging is no more than the prattling of an infant. "Do you not fear me? says the Lord; will you not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jeremiah 5:22)

One would not wonder if the mighty rocks were set for the bound of the sea; we expect to see the waves break to pieces against them; but sand is the symbol of weakness and instability. It is easily moved and shifted from one place to another by the waves of the sea. Yet that very shifting sand is what God has set by a perpetual decree as the bound for the sea. Against it the waves toss themselves, but they cannot pass it, and expend their strength in a roar of baffled, helpless fury. God's word has said, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further," (Job 38:11) and they are forced to obey. What is the lesson for us? Just this: "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are you in Christ Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:27-30)

All power is of God, and He can exert it through the most insignificant agent. He made man to be an associate with Him in government, and so He is pleased to manifest His mighty power through puny man. This is to His glory. The fact that God can stir up or still the sea is cited as a reason why we should have confidence in Him, and then He says: "I have put my words in your mouth." (Isaiah 51:16)

The word by which the heavens and the earth were made; the word which says to the sea, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed," (Job 38:11) is the word which He has placed in our mouth. It is marvelous, is it not? but it is true. What are we to do with this word? Keep it, and use it against the enemy. "The sword of the Spirit ... is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17)

It was that word in the mouth of Christ, which said, "Get you hence, Satan;" (Matthew 4:10) and the devil left Him. He was as weak as any man, for He said, "I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30)

But the word was almighty in His mouth, and so will it be in the mouth of every one who keeps it. Then what if we are weak and as easily moved as the sand? The God who makes the sand the bound of the sea, can use even us, when the enemy comes in like a flood, to lift up a standard against him. (Isaiah 59:19) Even so, let it be.--Present Truth, October 26, 1899--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 93:3-4.

Chapter 141

Psalm 93: In the Hollow of His Hand

Anyone who has been at sea in a storm knows how utterly insignificant man and all his works appear in comparison with the force disporting itself about him. Yet, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm 93:4)

The forces that we see in nature are but the "outskirts of His ways." (Job 26:14)

If you wish for a vivid illustration of God's infinite power, fill the palm of the hand with water, and note how few drops there are, and how easily they are comprehended. Then know that God "has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand," (Isaiah 40:12) these waters that wash all shores, and across which the traveler sails day after day with no horizon but the waves. He cannot go beyond the hollow of the Lord's hand, and as water that is held carefully in the hand, so near are we in all the affairs of our lives to the heart and thought of God. This 40th of Isaiah begins with, "Comfort you, comfort you my people," (Isaiah 40:1) and the comfort is that all the mighty power of God revealed in the chapter is pledged to the faint.

When things go wrong, and you are tempted to think that even the Lord cannot hold them level and bring calmness and quietness to the troubled waters, just fill the hollow of your hand and see how easily you can hold it still. With infinitely greater ease the Lord can bring quietness and peace into the troubled life.--Present Truth, March 15, 1894--Psalm 93:4.

Chapter 142

Psalm 94: Taught of God

The Lord teaches all persons who are willing to be taught of Him. The text-book is His word, and the knowledge to be gained is the knowledge of Him. To know Him is to become wise unto salvation, but to be ignorant of Him is to walk in the path of darkness and death.

It is a mistake to say that: "The proper study of mankind is man."--Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man.

The study of man by man, with a view to learning moral and spiritual truth, is heathenism. The proper study of mankind is God; and the proper teacher for mankind is God. Only God himself knows what knowledge is essential for man's highest welfare, and only He is competent to teach us the truth concerning himself.

But God's school, in which He instructs mankind, is the school of adversity. This is so not because God ordained it thus, but because of the perversity of human nature. Men are very rarely able to learn what is good for them to know through prosperity. And therefore, while God delights to bless His creatures with the good things of this life, He is very often obliged to withhold them in order that men may learn that lesson so necessary to life, of entire dependence upon Him.

When we remember that the best men of all ages have been fitted for their work in this way, and that only so have they been able to learn the highest lessons of truth, we should view adversity in a different light from that in which it is seen by the world, and should meet it not with a rebellious or despairing spirit, but with a spirit of resignation and even of welcome. The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law." (Psalm 94:12)

When chastening comes, it is but the hour of the Lord's instruction, when He will reveal to us wondrous things out of His law. We shall then learn

precious lessons if we do not close up the avenues of communication with Him by murmurings and repining. "That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked." (Psalm 94:13)

In that hour we must see with the eye of faith, and by that we shall understand that what seems a grievous calamity is in reality a blessing, and that it is sent in order that in the real day of adversity we may be hid. For that is never a calamity which does not sever the soul's connection with God, and whatever binds the soul more closely to Him is the greatest blessing.

If we understand the meaning of adversity, we shall know that it does not mean that God has forsaken us. For faith says, "The Lord will not to cast off His people, neither will He forsakeHis inheritance." (Psalm 94:14)

The idea which comes so naturally at such times that God has forsaken us, is from the devil; he suggests it to us, for from the first, in his warfare against God, he has sought to gain his point by misrepresentation. So he suggests that God has cast us off, that we have done nothing to deserve such affliction, and that therefore God is unjust and not to be depended upon, and His service unprofitable.

It was the devil who brought the trouble, and this was his object in bringing it. But God turns the weapons of Satan into a means of grace to all those who will let Him do with them as He will; and through the very clouds and darkness cast about man by the prince of evil, He reveals more clearly the light of His love and mercy, and His power unto salvation.

Happy is that man who is able to discern the Divine hand in his afflictions, as well as in the blessings that belong to prosperity. If men will but open their minds and hearts to Him, it will not take Him long to teach them the great lesson of entire dependence upon Him, and Him alone. "He does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men." (Lamentations 3:33)

But because men are slow to learn, the affliction and grief are often long drawn out. Job sat many days in sackcloth and ashes while God was teaching

him the lesson of justifying Him rather than self, but when at last the time came for God to reveal himself, a single glimpse of Him caused Job to exclaim, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6)

And no man, having the view of God that Job then had, could have said otherwise. It is only because men know not God and will not let Him reveal himself to them as He longs to do, that they continue to admire and trust in themselves.

No one who will let God teach him of himself as fully as God desires himself to be known, can fail of eternal life. "As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." (John 17:2)--Present Truth, September 20, 1894--Psalm 94:12-14.

Chapter 143

Psalm 94: Kept from Falling

"When I said, My foot slips; your mercy, O Lord, held me up." (Psalm 94:18)

There is therefore no need for anybody utterly to fall. In the very time when we feel as though everything were giving way, we may know that: "[God] is able to keep us from falling, and that He will do it, because: "[He] raises up all that be bowed down." (Psalm 145:14) "The Lord is ... a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

So that any difficulty that we got into should simply serve as a reminder to us of the presence of the Lord.--Present Truth, December 13, 1900--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 94:18.

Chapter 144

Psalm 95: The Flock of God

"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." (Psalm 95:6) "Know you not that the Lord He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." (Psalm 100:3)

Who are His sheep? Is it just those who acknowledge and serve Him? or is it all? Evidently the latter; for in the Psalm whence the first text is cited, the exhortation follows, "Today if you will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts." (Psalm 95:7-8)

And the other text intimates that His sheep consist of those whom He has created.

Still more positive proof that all men are originally considered as God's flock, is found in: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Everyone who has gone astray, and every one for whom Christ died, belongs to His flock. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

The Lord Jehovah is the Shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

Jesus says, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

Christ died for all, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

So we see that all people on earth are rightfully His sheep. Ah, what infinite comfort there is in that thought, when it is accepted; every one who will allow that he is one of the Lord's flock can say with confidence, "I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

Sad to say, not all will acknowledge the Lord as their Shepherd. We cannot tell who they are, who by their own unbelief take themselves out of His flock; but He knows. Jesus says, "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." (John 10:10)

To some He said, "You believed not, because you are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:26-27)

Jesus stands and calls, and those who hear and follow Him thereby prove that they are indeed His sheep. Those who gather to Him at His call form what is commonly termed His church; for the Greek word that is rendered "church" is composed of two words which means literally "called out."

The words "church" and "flock" are used interchangeably, as in the words of Paul to the elders of the church in Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28)

The word which is used in the Old Testament, however, and which ought still to be used instead of "church," is "congregation." It would be vastly better if "congregation" were always used when speaking of the body of Christ, and the word "church" were wholly abandoned.

The word "congregation" comes directly from the Latin word which means "flock." It means literally, "flocked together," and aptly designates those who gather together from all directions, at the Shepherd's call.

When the Lord calls, His sheep hear His voice, and flock to Him. Thus being "called out" of this present evil world, they form one body, a

congregation. Of course they are not all in one single place on this earth; so there are many little congregations, and yet only one congregation, since they are all one in Christ.

Since the flock has come in response to the Lord's voice, they will not, after having assembled, listen to any other voice. "Hear Him" is the command from above. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." (Matthew 17:5)

If any other voice is listened to, the only result is the dividing and scattering of the flock. Remember that the only test of whether or not any are Christ's flock, is the voice of Christ. All who listen to it are His sheep; those who will not hear it are goats that are at last to be separated from the flock. Matthew 25:31-32. And those who use other than Christ's voice, that is, His words, are "grievous wolves" or else thieves and robbers.

It will readily be seen that the flock of God, "the congregation of the righteous," (Psalm 1:5) is not a law-making, but a law-keeping body. The flock does not rule, but is ruled. The ruling, however, is by Christ, the great Shepherd, whose ruling consists in feeding. Compare Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:6, margin. It would manifestly be most absurd for a flock of sheep to lay down rules for its own guidance; much more to presume to be rulers of others.

From this we can see the impropriety of the use of the word "church," as applied to the Lord's flock. That word means "lordly," and came into use with the rising up of the men of whom Paul gave warning,--men "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30)

These men began to lord it over God's heritage, and soon the idea became prevalent that they themselves constituted the church. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, introduced or at least gave prominence to the idea, which soon became prevalent, that: "The church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the church is controlled by these same rulers...Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the church, and the church in the bishop; and if anyone be not with the bishop, that he is not in the church."

As a consequence, the bishops, instead of considering themselves as under-shepherds, soon claimed to be "the church," that is the lords of the people. Instead of giving their lives for the flock, they slaughtered the flock for their own pleasure. But lordship is not a thing that has any place in the house of God. To us there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ. Him will we hear. From any other voice than His we will flee.

The word "church" has obtained such a foothold, that it is not at all probable that it will ever be replaced by the rightful word, "congregation;" but when we use it we must remember that the church of Christ is not a house of lords but is a flock, feeding on the words of the "one Lord."

How much better this position than the former. If we assume the lordship, we have all the burden and worry, with the fear, nay the certainty, of making mistakes; while if we are content to be humble sheep, led by the good Shepherd, we are sure to be kept safe, and brought into the everlasting kingdom. With what confidence we may rest! "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His armshall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:10-11)

His own life is answerable for the life of each member of the flock. Therefore, "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working inyou that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21)--Present Truth, May 19, 1898--Psalm 95:6-8

Chapter 145

Psalm 97: The Reign of Righteousness

"The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." (Psalm 97:1)

He reigns in righteousness, and that is why we are to rejoice. The fact that God's reign of righteousness is a cause of rejoicing, is in itself proof that it does not mean that He sits in stern righteousness to judge and condemn.

Righteousness means peace; for, being made righteous by faith "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace." (James 3:18)

We are to submit ourselves to the righteousness of God, that He may work it in us; and this is what His reign in righteousness means. He is able to produce perfect righteousness in every one that trusts in Him, "For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth: so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:11)--Present Truth, January 16, 1902--Psalm 97:1.

Chapter 146

Psalm 97: Gladness

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." (Psalm 97:11)

When we sow a thing we expect it to multiply and increase. So the Lord has sown gladness for the believer, that it may spring up continually.

When we represent Christ in us, it will be by our gladness for the truth He has given us:

• Not what we see, but what we know;

• Not what our reason has been able to trace out, but that which our faith has laid hold of and brought into the very life.

It will not be a forced gladness, but the springing up of the joy of the life of Christ.--Present Truth, March 1, 1894--Psalm 97:11.

Chapter 147

Psalm 102: Satisfied with Good Things

One of the things for which the psalmist calls upon his soul to bless the Lord is that: "He satisfies your mouth with good things." (Psalm 102:5)

This is no small thing, and it means far more than people are accustomed to think. It is not merely that: "[He] gives us richly all things to enjoy," (1 Timothy 6:17) withholding no good thing from us, although that would be enough for everlasting thanksgiving.

But the greatest blessing of all is to be satisfied with good things. It is one thing to receive good things, and quite another thing to be satisfied with them. Good things are simple and there are few people who have simple tastes.

Our so-called "natural tastes" are, because of our birth and training, wholly unnatural. There is scarcely one of the good things that God has given us to eat, that is not almost universally smothered with condiments of one sort or another before it is eaten.

All sorts of things are devised to stimulate the appetite, which refuses, to be satisfied, and which gets more and more dissatisfied, because nothing can give satisfaction except that which is good; and whatever God has made good is good in itself, without any addition whatever. "But," someone says, "we must enjoy what we eat, or else it will not digest well, and will not do us any good."

That is true, but it by no means signifies that we should eat everything that our untamed, capricious appetites crave. It simply shows the necessity of learning to like that which is good. Appetite must wait upon reason, and be controlled and instructed by it.

Our natural appetites are like spoiled, unruly, untrained children, and must be treated in the same way that such children ought to be treated. No

wise person would think it necessary to let such a child have his own way in everything. He must be instructed as to what is good. And until he is able to choose for himself, and choose well, someone must choose for him. He must not once be indulged in his waywardness, if his evil habits are to be broken.

If his confidence is gained, and his conscience is awakened, and his will brought into harmony with the right, the task of reformation will be a short one: very soon he will go in the right way as naturally as he used to in the wrong way, and will find infinitely more satisfaction in it.

In fact, for the first time in his life he will know what satisfaction is, and that satisfaction in doing the right will be one of the strongest safeguards to keep him from the evil.

That which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.
--John Milton, Comus.

Just so it is with our tastes. We have been accustomed to be swayed by them, yet the more we gratified them the less we were satisfied.

Now when we learn what is good, and see that it is good because it comes from the hand of God, and know that it must be the best thing for us, we shall believe that it tastes good to an undepraved or a regenerate appetite, and so we shall teach ourselves really to like it.

It is surprising how quickly one can teach himself to like the good when once firmly convinced that it is good. And then for the first time is one really satisfied. One finds life itself full of enjoyment, and is no more under the necessity of seeking for something to make it enjoyable or endurable.

To be satisfied with that which is good, so that never a longing desire arises for that which is evil, is one of the greatest blessings that God bestows upon us, and it is wonderfully easy to learn when one sets himself to learn at the source of goodness.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good. ... There is no want to them that fear Him." (Psalm 34:8-9)--Present Truth, November 8, 1900--Psalm 102:5.

Chapter 148

Psalm 103: Forgiving Mercy

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." (Psalm 103:2-3)

The Lord is the only healer. He is our life, and there is no life but from Him. Only He can heal disease.

But this text says more than this; it says not only that God is the healer, but that He heals all diseases. His healing power is coequal and co-extensive with His forgiving mercy.

Then why are not all healed? For the same reason that all are not saved; they do not recognize and accept the gift. God says to rebellious sinners: "Return unto me; for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah 44:22)

But all do not come. Forgiveness is free for all, however, if they will take it.

Ever so many who accept forgiveness, and rejoice in it, do not grasp the fact that the life which cleanses from sin is the life that raises the dead; and not believing for health, they do not receive it. "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29)--Present Truth, December 1, 1904--Psalm 103:2-3.

Chapter 149

Psalm 103: The Mercy of the Lord

Its Greatness

"As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:11) "Your mercy is great unto the heavens." (Psalm 72:10) "The earth, O Lord, is full of your mercy." (Psalm 119:64)

Its Duration

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 107:1) "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

By It, Sin Is Blotted Out

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." (Psalm 51:1)

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, the mercy of the Lord bestows His righteousness upon those who accept it.

It Provides Royal Clothing

Righteousness, holiness, which is given by the mercy of the Lord, is the clothing in which we can appear before Him without being ashamed.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah 61:10) "I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy; and in your fear will I worship toward your temple." (Psalm 5:7)

Take as Much as You Like

"Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You." (Psalm 33:22) "He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." (Psalm 32:10)

It is unlimited, and the measure that one receives and profits by depends only on his own faith to take it. We can have more than we can ask for; and we pay for what we have received by taking still more. Then, "Hope in Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm 130:7)

The Hand of Love

We are but children, however long we may live, and we never outgrow our longing for the touch of a loving hand. How many of the sorrows of childhood are seduced away into the land of forgetfulness by the mother's gentle touch.

Well, we need not be deprived of this necessary luxury, even though gray hairs have come to our heads, and we have no friend in sight to sympathize with us. The Lord, who is our protection behind and before, has laid His hand upon us, saying, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." (Isaiah 66:13)

It is a good thing to fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; (2 Samuel 24:14) and the everlasting arms are ever underneath us. (Deuteronomy 33:27) The Lord's hands are stretched out to us in love, and if we will but look to Him on the cross, we shall never be without the satisfying consciousness of their healing, strengthening power.--Present Truth, October 2, 1902--Psalm 103:11,17.

Chapter 150

Psalm 103: Like as a Father

"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them thatfear Him." (Psalm 103:13)

This text is one of the most precious and comforting to be found in the Bible. It has encouragement alike for old and young.

But expressive as the text is, it is doubtful if any ever grasp the fullness of its meaning. Most people doubtless think of a father's love and pity for a good child, but that is not what is referred to. The Scriptures themselves afford us a striking example of fatherly pity, which should always be considered in connection with this verse. It is the case of the man who wrote the text.

Absalom was a wayward son. How much of this waywardness was due to his father's indulgence, we need not now stop to inquire. The fact is that he was thoroughly selfish. There is no evidence to show that he had any real love for anything except himself.

Yet his father loved him. When Absalom killed his brother Amnon, and fled, "David longed to go forth unto Absalom." (2 Samuel 13:39)

The soul of David was consumed with longing for his son. Finally Absalom was recalled from exile and received the kiss of forgiveness, and lived in the presence of his father. Surely he could not ask for more than this. But then it was that the hatefulness of his disposition began really to show itself. "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him and said, Of what city are you? And he said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, your matters are good and right: but there as no man deputed of the king to hear you. Absalom said

moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which has any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. And it was so, that when any man came near to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." (2 Samuel 15:1-6)

David was a good and just king. He ruled in the fear of God. But Absalom would not give him an opportunity to redress the grievances of his people, for he would stop them before they could make their case known to the king. Then by his wicked lies he would steal their hearts away from the king, and fix them upon himself.

After Absalom had pursued this course until he thought he could depend upon the people's following him, he came to his father, and with a lying pretense of wishing to pay a vow to God, secured leave to go to Hebron. There he consummated his rebellion against his father. He sent spies all through the tribes of Israel saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, Absalom reigns in Hebron. ... And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor. ... And the conspiracy was strong: for the people increased continually with Absalom." (2 Samuel 15:10,12)

Then the old king had to flee for his life from the face of his son. With a few who still clung to him, he left the city on foot. In David's palace in Jerusalem, Absalom plotted to take away his life. "Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night; And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and I will make him afraid; and all the people that are with him shall flee: and I will smite the king only; And I will bring back all the people unto you; the man whom you seek is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well." (2 Samuel 17:1-4)

This advice so gladly received by Absalom shows his heartlessness. His only desire was to kill his father. The only reason why he did not act upon it

was that he was led to believe that there was a more sure way of taking the life of the king. God defeated the counsel of Ahithophel.

Then Absalom raised a great army and went out to take the life of his father, who had never showed him anything but love. So much for Absalom.

But how did the king still feel toward his rebellious son? Listen to him as he stands by the gate as the people go out to meet the army of Absalom: "And the king commanded Joab and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom." (2 Samuel 18:5)

Not a thought of revenge entered into the king's heart. Only love for his wicked son was there. In spite of the king's request, Absalom was slain. Very tenderly and delicately was the news broken to David. ""And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber and wept; and as he went, thus he said. O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for you, Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33)

And, "The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom. O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 19:4)

Stop a little, and think of such wonderful love after all that Absalom had done to him. And this was the man who wrote, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:13)

Does not that text mean much more when we consider these circumstances? It is God himself who gives us this illustration of His love for us; for His Spirit caused the story of David and Absalom to be recorded, and His Spirit inspired the words in the 103rd Psalm.

David's love for Absalom could not save his life. How different the case with God! He is able to do all that is in His heart. His love was so great towards His rebellious children that He did actually give himself. "God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died

for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by thedeath of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:8-10)

Such love as this is beyond human comprehension.

• It is that which passes knowledge, and yet it may be known by all who will receive it.

• It does not exhaust itself in vain longings for its object, but it accomplishes definite results.

• It saves the soul from death, by saving it from its rebellion.

• It sheds itself abroad in the heart of the sinner, turning his rebellion into love.

"We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

And we can confidently trust this love: for since God bestowed it so freely upon us when we were rebels, what may we not expect when we have become friends through it? "What shall we then say to these things? ... For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31,38-39)--Bible Echo, January 15, 1893--Psalm 103:13.

Chapter 151

Psalm 103: Bruised and Healed

Our little child has fallen and bruised herself badly. The flesh is black and blue and swollen. Her eyes fill with tears, her lips quiver, and her whole body is trembling with the pain and the fright. Her countenance and her very attitude are a pitiful appeal for help and sympathy.

What is to be done in such a case? Every parent knows what is the first impulse, and what brings the most speedy relief. Soothing remedies may be applied, but the greatest relief comes from the folding in the mother's arms, and the loving kisses of sympathy that are bestowed. The little one settles down quietly, the strain is relaxed, the trembling ceases, and soon the pain is forgotten.

What a common occurrence this is, and yet how slow we are to learn the lesson it suggests. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13-14)

We are but children. Compared with God, we are far more helpless than our children are compared with us. God deals with us as sons, for we are His children; and His love and pity for us are as much greater than ours for our children as God is greater than we are. Think of that statement, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:13)

He pities them in just the came way, only infinitely more. That is to say, He takes us up in His arms, if we will but come to Him, knowing that He is our Father, and He soothes the pain and heals the bruise. For, "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." (Psalm 147:3)

Christ says, "Come unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him "to heal the broken-hearted, ... to set at liberty them that are bruised," (Luke 4:18) "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)

That is just what we need. We have fallen and are sorely bruised. We are "laden with iniquity ... the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isaiah 1:4-6)

Our need is desperate. Believing that the Lord is indeed our Father, we come to Him, and find that His arms are stretched out to receive us. He says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." (Isaiah 66:13)

What does this mean but that He will take us up in His arms? How else does a mother comfort her babes? When Jesus was on earth, He took up the little ones in His arms, (Mark 10:16) and in so doing He was but manifesting the love and tenderness of the Father. We are sadly battered and bruised by sin. But, "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. ... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for ouriniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5)

How blessed is the assurance that:

There is mercy with the Saviour;
There is healing in His blood.
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
--Frederick William Faber, Hymn: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, 1862.

These things are real. They are not figures of speech. They are as real as God himself. To doubt the reality of God's comfort, to doubt that "underneath are the everlasting arms," (Deuteronomy 33:27) and that God

does as really fold us in His embrace as the earthly father does his child, is to doubt the reality of the existence of God. We cannot know anything of God except as He reveals himself to us. To doubt that He is just what He declares himself to be, is to doubt that He exists at all.

But in all His Word He has revealed himself as the tender, pitying, loving Parent. Let us then come to Him believing that He is, and that He delights in mercy. Then, having tasted that the Lord is precious, we shall say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for your love is better than wine." (Song of Solomon 1:2)

Why not allow the Lord to be as real to us as He actually is?

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.
--Frederick William Faber, Hymn: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy, 1862.

--Present Truth, April 25, 1895--Psalm 103:13-14.

Chapter 152

Psalm 104: Pensioners on God's Bounty

What a wonderful householder God is! how vast is His estate, and what an infinite number of tenants He has! But, unlike the tenants of most landlords, instead of contributing to His support, they subsist wholly on His bounty, paying no rent whatever. Thus, we read, "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom You have made them all: the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, wherein are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts. These wait all upon You, that You may give them their meat in due season. That You give them they gather; You open your hand, they are satisfied with good." (Psalm 104:24-28,margin)

They are all looking to the Lord for their food, and expecting that He will provide it. When the wild beasts roar, they are asking God for their portion. And He has it ready for them; He keeps them merely for the pleasure of seeing them enjoy themselves.

What a source of encouragement this is for man made in His image to be a companion for Him, to trust Him for support.--Present Truth, January 22, 1903--Psalm 104:24-28.

Chapter 153

Psalm 104: The Comfort of God's Face

Some men, yes, very many people, wish, like Jonah, to flee from the presence of the Lord; many, like Adam and Eve, would hide themselves because of a feeling of guilt; but none such know the Lord, or the joy of His presence.

Of all the creatures that fill the earth and sea, we read,

"You hide your face, they are troubled." (Psalm 104:29)

The Hebrew word signifies, "terrified," or put in distress. It is the same word that is rendered, "vex," in Psalm 2:5, and "confounded," in Psalm 83:17. Thus we see that the beasts and creeping things and fishes, find their happiness solely in the shining of God's face upon them, although they are not able, like man, to understand the source of their well-being.

When Moses was troubled at the prospect before him as the leader of a murmuring and rebellious host, God said, "My presence [literally, "my face"] shall go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

So we read that: "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because You had a favor unto them." (Psalm 44:3)

His face brings salvation.

"Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause your face to shine; and we shall be saved." (Psalm 80:19) "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:15-16)

So, at last, the supreme joy, the sum of the reward of the redeemed, will be this, that: "They shall see His face." (Revelation 22:4)

Surely, then, we ought in this time to respond heartily to the words of the psalmist: "When You said, Seek my face; my heart said unto You, your face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm 27:8)--Present Truth, January 22, 1903--Psalm 104:29.

Chapter 154

Psalm 105: Life Before Obedience

God redeems before He enjoins; and only the redeemed can truly keep His commandments. He delivered His people from Egypt "that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." (Psalm 105:45)

We do not get life by keeping the commandments, but God gives us life in order that we may keep them.--Present Truth, April 11, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 105:45.

Chapter 155

Psalm 107: Why Give Thanks?

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy en dures for ever." (Psalm 107:1)

Notice well the reason for giving thanks to God. It is because He is good. Most people who give thanks unto the Lord, or who think that they give thanks to Him, do so because:

• they have received some special thing that they longed for;

• they feel well and happy;

• they feel in just the right mood for giving thanks; o they are in comfortable and favorable circumstances.

But none of these things are the true reason for thanksgiving; there is just one ground, and that is, because: "He is good: for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 107:1)

Thus we have a constant cause of rejoicing; for God is always good. Everything else fluctuates; but the goodness of God is continuous.

The times may be hard; we may have trouble and affliction; the way may be dark before us, and everything may seem to be against us; but none of these things need diminish our thanksgiving; for God is good, and His mercy endures for ever.

God is equally good at all times, and He is always as good as it is possible for Him to be. He is just as good and just as near, in the darkness and the storm, as in the sunshine and the calm and it is His goodness alone, that is the reason for giving thanks. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8; also vs. 15,21,31)--Present Truth, August 22, 1901--Psalm 107:1,8.

Chapter 156

Psalm 107: Tell it Out

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psalm 107:1-2)

There are two ways of reading the last part of this text, and both are correct. The first is the most common: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so," with the emphasis on the word "redeemed." That is good, for the redeemed of the Lord ought, certainly, above all others, to say that the Lord is good. But the better way to read it makes this much more emphatic: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

If the Lord has dealt well with you, say so; tell others of it. Do not keep it to yourself, for that is dishonoring to God and unfair to your neighbors and friends, who have a right to the encouragement that you could give them.

Silence is also disastrous to yourself. Says the psalmist: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old." (Psalm 32:3)

He who never tells others of what he knows of the goodness of God, will soon lose his sense of it. When a lamp does not shine it is darkness; "and if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness." (Matthew 6:23)--Present Truth, August 22, 1901--Psalm 107:1-2.

Chapter 157

Psalm 107: Bread from Heaven

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, who He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He deliveredthem out of their distresses." (Psalm 107:1-6)

That is a description of a portion of the experience of the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and it is written for the instruction and encouragement of God's redeemed people in all lands to the end of time. Read the whole story, in the 16th chapter of Exodus.

One of the first lessons for us to learn from it is that God gives according to our need, and not according to our actions. The people murmured in the wilderness, charging Moses and Aaron with having led them out to kill them, and thus denying God's leadership; yet God supplied them with food just as readily as though they had honored Him. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Psalm 103:10)

The next lesson that we should learn is the uselessness and the sinfulness of complaining when in trouble. Many hundred years later several thousand of the descendants of the same people were out in a desert place without any food. Jesus said to Philip, "Whence shall we by bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He himself knew what He would do." (John 6:5-6)

Even so it was when the people were in the desert without bread in the days of Moses. The same Lord was with them, and, "He himself knew what He would do." (John 6:6)

God knew that there was no food in the wilderness, yet He had led them there; and this is the reason why: "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:2-3)

The most obvious reason for the giving of the manna, was to satisfy the hunger of the people. But we are told that God first "suffered them to hunger." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

He knew what He would do; He designed all the time to feed them out of His abundant storehouse; and His suffering them to hunger was for the purpose of preparing them for His gift, and causing them to appreciate it. So we may know that whenever God suffers us to get into distress, that is an evidence that He has something for us.

Why God Gives Food

But this is not all. God suffered the people to hunger, and then fed them with manna, in order that they might know that man does not live by bread only. That is, God wishes us to know that our daily food is to teach us of His salvation. This is plainly set forth in: "They believed not in God, trusted not in His salvation: Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food." (Psalm 78:22-25)

Even though they had bread from heaven, they did not trust in God's salvation! That bread which came down from heaven was Christ's own self,--His body,--for Jesus said, "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. ... I am the bread of life." (John 6:33,35)

The fathers "did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:3-4)

They drank from Christ, and they ate from Him; their life day by day was sustained by Him,--in fact, He was their life,--yet they trusted not in His salvation! Was it not strange?

Do you not see the real reason why God gives us food for the nourishment of our bodies? It is that we may know and remember our dependence upon Him. We eat in order to live; but it is "In Him that we live, and move, and have all our being." (Acts 17:28)

God could, if He wished, keep us alive without food; but in that case we could not so readily recognize the fact that we are not self-existent nor self-sustained. Our daily bread-our life--not only comes from heaven, from the hand of God, but it brings to us the very life of God,--the life by which we are saved. The power of God, which saves every one that believes, (Romans 1:16) is seen "in the things that are made." (Romans 1:20)

This truth is made very apparent in the miracle recorded in the 6th chapter of John, together with the talk that followed.

There were five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, and but five loaves of bread; yet as Jesus took the bread in His hands, and broke it, it multiplied, so that all were filled, and there was more bread at the close of the meal than at the beginning.

There the people could see with their own eyes that the bread that they ate came directly from Christ; and this is the truth which this miracle, as well as that of the manna, is designed to teach us concerning our daily bread.

Our daily bread contains the life of the Lord, and yet it is but representative of that life; for Christ came that we might have life, and that we "might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

The life that is contained in all the food and drink and air and sunlight on this earth is but a small fraction of the infinite life of the Great Creator and Father of all, which is at the service of all who will accept it. These visible media of His life are designed to teach us our dependence on Him, and to introduce us to His inexhaustible storehouse of power.

A Sabbath Lesson

So giving the children of Israel manna God was proving them whether they would walk in His law or not. It was not merely to see if they would keep the Sabbath day. They could not very well help keeping that, outwardly, at least, when no manna fell on the seventh day, and twice the usual amount fell on the sixth day.

For forty years God made it plain which day of the week was the seventh day, and how sacredly He regarded it; and the same day, with the same sacredness, is the Sabbath of the Lord today; and if we do not keep it, we read the story of the manna in vain.

But, as already stated, it was not for the purpose of seeing if the Israelites would nominally keep the Sabbath, that the manna was given.

• It was to see if they would trust God implicitly; for that is true Sabbath-keeping.

• It was to see if they would accept His life as their own, and recognize and acknowledge day by day that they lived only by Him, and so allow Him to control their every act and thought.

That is the lesson He wishes us to learn from the record, as well as from the food which He daily gives us.

The Sabbath itself is given to make us know God is the Creator and Sanctifier. You would laugh at the idea of anybody saying in the wilderness when the manna was being given every week day, that he didn't see how he

could keep the Sabbath, and that he should certainly lose his living if he did. The God who commanded the observance of the Sabbath was the God who was feeding them from His own table, and, so to speak, making it easier for them to keep the Sabbath than not to.

Well, the same conditions obtain today. The same commandment is in force, and the same God lives to supply us with our daily bread. Do not think that the account of the giving of the manna was recorded merely for our amusement. It was that we might learn the lesson of trust in God. Dare you do it? or do you think that He cannot or will not do for you what He did for ancient Israel? Was the record written in vain, so far as you are concerned?

A Lesson of Unselfishness

The Apostle Paul refers to the gathering of the manna, to enforce the lesson of unselfish giving. When he was pleading for a liberal collection for the poor saints, he wrote: "I mean not that other men be eased, and you be burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may also be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack." (2 Corinthians 8:13-15; compare Exodus 16:16-18)

Some in reading the words, "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack," have supposed that in some reckless manner the manna shrunk if one had gathered more than a certain quantity, and increased if he had not gathered enough; but the fact is that those who had more than they needed for the day divided with those who had an insufficient quantity. There was the same condition that existed after Pentecost, when all the believers had all things common, and none laid up for the future.

The lesson of the manna is not only that God gives bread, but that He gives it to us as we need it. We can trust Him to provide for our wants, even as little children trust their parents.

The Lord feeds us from His own table, and naught of that which we have belongs to us. Therefore we are to consider that all of His children have the same right to the Lord's table that we have. If we find more "under our hand" than we need for the time, it is not to be hoarded up to spoil, but passed on to be used while it is fresh.

So as we live by faith in the "God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all," (Ephesians 4:6,RV) we will give day by day our daily bread, supplying all our need according to His riches and glory, and His kingdom will come, and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven.--Present Truth, June 19, 1902--Psalm 107:1-6.

Chapter 158

Psalm 107: The Right Way

We are told in the 107th Psalm of the troubles and the deliverance of the children of Israel. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He deliveredthem out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Psalm 107:4-7)

The Lord himself went in the way before them, to search out the place for them to pitch their tents in, and He accompanied them; and all the ways of the Lord are right ways.

Not an Easy Way

But the way was not smooth, and it was beset with difficulties. The very first march brought them into a narrow place between the mountains and the sea, where there was no escape from a pursuing enemy. "The right way" in which the Lord led them was "a solitary way," a desert place, where there was no water, and where they seemed likely to die of thirst.

Because they found difficulties, they at once jumped to the conclusion that God was not leading them, and they murmured against Moses, charging him with intending to kill them. But Moses was only following the Lord's leading.

Judging by Appearances

How often we find Christians today acting just as ancient Israel did. They start some enterprise, and if everything is favorable they conclude that the Lord is opening the way for them, and leading them; but as soon as difficulties or reverses come, they are thrown into confusion, and think that they have been mistaken, and that God was not leading them, or else that He has forsaken them.

The consequence of this sort of judging is that they are never certain of their course. They are always more or less in doubt, and fluctuating in their emotions,--sanguine and rejoicing when things go smoothly, and despondent and faint-hearted when the way is difficult. Such judgment is most faulty, as Christ says: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24)

The Way of the Cross

The truth is that the only right way is the way of the cross. Christ is the way, and we cannot know Him at all, except as Christ crucified. When He was on this earth, the only way back to heaven was by the cross. Indeed, it was the cross that brought Him from heaven to earth. By the cross He was lifted up to a seat at the right hand of God; and by that same cross He will come again "with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

He did not become discouraged and turn back when He saw the cross; and the exhortation to us is: "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds." (Hebrews 12:3) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." (1 Peter 4:12)

Trying to "See the Way Clear"

How often we hear people say that they "can't see their way clear," or that they are waiting until they can see the way clear ahead of them. How foolish! It is utterly impossible for anybody to tell what will take place one minute in the future. We cannot hope to see our way ahead, except as we see Christ, who is the way.

God knows the end from the beginning; and the way that He leads us is the right way, even though it is dark as night. The sea, which shut off the progress of the Israelites, was itself the way for them to go. God had chosen it, and therefore it was the way of safety.

Then as we commit the keeping of our souls to Him, let us not murmur when His way leads through the deep waters or the trackless desert, but follow on, every singing:

Your way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by your own hand,
And choose the path for me.

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might;
You choose for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is yours; so let the way
That leads to it be yours,
Else I must surely stray.

Take now my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to You may seem;
You choose my good and ill.
--Horatius Bonar, Hymn: Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord, 1857.

--Present Truth, January 23, 1902--Psalm 107:4-7.

Chapter 159

Psalm 107: Giving Praise

The Psalmist exclaims, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8; also vs. 15,21,31)

Why, indeed, should not man praise the Lord for these things? Are not His goodness and wonderful works manifest? Yes, they are seen and felt on every side. Is praise a difficult thing to produce? No; it is no more difficult than to speak. And yet few and faint are the words of praise that ascend to Him from a world overflowing with His gifts.

The fact only shows the paralyzing power of sin. It is sin that stops the voice of praise and blinds the sight to the tokens of the goodness of God. He says, "Whoso offers praise glorifies me." (Psalm 50:23)

And it is when men glorify Him that He can let His glory be seen upon them. This is what would follow if men would but praise Him as the Psalmist desired. The glory of the Lord would be seen in the earth to the wonder of all and the salvation of many sinners.

Every sin is a testimony against God and in favor of him with whom sin originated. Sin began with a failure to give praise to God. Lucifer wanted some of that praise for himself; and ever since that time he has been endeavoring to secure the praise of men.

There is praise enough in the world, but it is not bestowed where it is due. Praise belongs unto God; it is due to Him alone; but men are willing to praise even things inanimate, rather than Him.

If men would not manifest such base ingratitude and blind folly, God would do wonderful things for them beyond all that they have seen or imagined. The loss is theirs, not His.

What good would it be to do more while His wonderful works that are now done are passed by almost without a word of recognition or praise?--Present Truth, January 3, 1895--Psalm 107:8.

Chapter 160

Psalm 107: Strength in Weakness

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." (Psalm 107:23-24)

What are the works of the Lord, and the wonders in the deep, which are seen in the great waters? The answer is given in the next verses: "For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves thereof." (Psalm 107:25)

The mighty power of God is seen by those who go to sea. God rules in the sea. When Jonah sought to flee from the presence of the Lord, and took a ship bound for Tarshish, "The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." (Jonah 1:4)

But as soon as Jonah was out of the boat "the sea ceased from her raging." (Jonah 1:15) "He rules the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, He stills them." (Psalm 89:9)

An example of this is seen in the stilling of the tempest by Christ on the sea of Galilee. "He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:39)

The word here rendered "peace" is the same that a mother would use in quieting a boisterous child: "Hush; quiet," she will say; and just as with a restless infant did Jesus deal with the tempestuous sea. For Jesus was Immanuel, "God with us," (Matthew 1:23) and: "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm 93:4)

There is nothing more awful than the sea when lashed to fury by a violent wind. The destruction that it can work is beyond all description. The

strongest works of man are unable to resist its force. No other created thing can equal the sea in power and grandeur; yet it is to God no more than the tiniest infant. See how strikingly this is set forth by the Lord in His instruction to Job: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth, as if it had issued out of the womb; When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, And prescribed for it my decree, and set bars and doors, And said, Thus far shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed." (Job 38:8-11,RV)

The sea with all the might of its proud waves, is to the Lord only as a newly-born infant in swaddling bands. And this God is the God of our salvation. Nor only do the wonders of God in the deep show "the power of God unto salvation of those who believe," (Romans 1:16) but they are cited as encouragement to those who labor for the salvation of others. Read: "I, even I, am He that comforts you; who are you, that you are afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And have forgotten the Lord your Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and fear continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he makes ready to destroy. ... I am the Lord your God, which stirred up the sea, that the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is His name. And I have put my words in your mouth, and have covered youin the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, You are my people." (Isaiah 51:12-13,15-16)

The God who can stir up the sea, so that it will roar, and then still it again with a whisper, is the God who put His Word in the mouths of those who will be ambassadors for Christ. Nay, more, the very word that can do this, is the word which He puts into the mouths of those who will yield themselves to Him, to obey and speak only His Word, and no words of their own.

In God's dealing with the sea we have still further encouragement as "laborers together with God." (1 Corinthians 3:9) "[God has] placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it." (Jeremiah 5:23)

Yet this same sand is unstable and shifting. He who builds on it is sure to come to destruction. "And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:26-27)

"A rope of sand" is an expression for weakness; yet this same sand serves in the hands of God to restrain the raging sea, and keep it in bounds. So although man is weakness itself, and worse than useless to build upon, the word which God puts in his mouth will build a new heavens and a new earth. "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Faith in God will manufacture strength out of weakness. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." (Hebrews 11:33-34)

The sea itself, which rages so furiously, is but water, which is unstable and weak. The strength that it exhibits is the strength of God. "Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)--Present Truth, September 15, 1898--Psalm 107:23-24.

Chapter 161

Psalm 107: The God of the Waters

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." (Psalm 107:23-24)

God's everlasting power and Divinity are seen in all the things that He has made; but in no other part of creation is it so wondrously apparent to the senses of man as in the great waters and seas.

Nothing can produce greater feelings of awe, or strike greater terror to the soul than the sea in a terrible storm. Before nothing else does man have such a sense of utter helplessness; and therefore it is that when in the Scriptures special comfort is to be given to the weak and disheartened, and it is desired to encourage them to trust in God, their attention is most frequently directed to His power as revealed in and over the waters.

To the foolish and rebellious people, God says: "Do you not fear me? will you not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" (Jeremiah 5:22)

Sand is as much an emblem of instability as water is; to build on the sand is to have no foundation at all; yet the shifting sand is that which God has set to curb the fierceness of the raging waves of the sea,--to show how His power is manifest through weakness.

God lays the beams of His chambers in the waters; (Psalm 104:3) and His pavilion round about Him is dark waters and clouds of the skies. (Psalm 17:11) Thus it is that:

"The Lord sits upon the flood," (Psalm 24:3) and, "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters." (Psalm 24:10)

God is at home on the sea, and the waters know Him and obey Him. When He led Israel out of Egypt, "The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back." (Psalm 114:3)

Or, as picturesquely put in the Danish, "Jordan turned, and ran back," as though frightened at the presence of the Lord. In the 93rd Psalm there is presented to us the idea of a contest between the seas and the Lord. Thus, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up theirvoice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (Psalm 93:3-4)

No matter how loudly and madly the waves roar, God's voice is powerful enough to quell their fury. "You rule the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, You still them." (Psalm 89:9) "[He] stills the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." (Psalm 65:7)

His power was seen at the Red Sea, when "[He] divided the sea, whose waves roared." (Isaiah 51:15)

The primary meaning of the Hebrew word here rendered "divided," is "to terrify, to restrain by threatening." All those statements of God's power over the mighty waters, and of how His voice can bring their voices to silence, are vividly illustrated, and shown to be real, and not figures of speech, by the incident of Christ on the sea of Galilee in a storm. "There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." (Mark 4:37)

But Christ was the Son of Him who builds His house on the waters, so He lay "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow," (Mark 4:38) unmindful of the raging of the sea. Then the disciples came and awoke Him, and said reproachfully, "Master, don't You care that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark 4:38-39)

The word here rendered "Peace" is the word that one would use to children who were too boisterous in their play, namely, "Hush!" It may be very quietly spoken, yet if spoken by one who is known to have authority it carries with it a warning of punishment to follow if it is disregarded. So it is said that Jesus "rebuked" the winds and the waves, or as in Isaiah, He restrained them by a threat. They recognized the voice of their Master, and obeyed. Thus we see how the voice of the Lord is upon the waters.

All this is wonderful, but it ought not to be surprising, for it is but a continuation of the working of the Spirit that in the beginning brooded upon the face of the waters, and brought order out of chaos. To disbelieve the record in the 1st chapter of Genesis, and yet to profess to believe the Gospel narratives, is foolishness. In the beginning God gathered the waters together, marshaling them in groups, as a general does his troops, and said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." (Genesis 1:6)

So what more natural now than that "When He utters His voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth." (Jeremiah 10:13)

Here we have warning to the rebellious and comfort for the timid. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." (Isaiah 57:20)

But though they rage against the righteous, God can with a word cause their strength to fail, and their fury to cease. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, Then had they swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us; Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; Then the proud waters had gone over our soul." (Psalm 124:2-5)

But the floods of evil man, or of evil itself, cannot prevail against those who trust in the Lord; for when they pass through the waters He is with them. He is at home there, for the dark waters are His pavilion round about Him. "He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." (Psalm 18:11)

So though war and persecution rise against us; though, worse still, the devil with his temptations comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against the billows, and we can abide quietly in the secret place of the Most High. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19) "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)--Present Truth, July 9, 1903--Psalm 107:23-24.

Chapter 162

Psalm 111: Great Things

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious." (Psalm 111:2-3) "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also." (Psalm 95:3-4) "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145:3) "For You are great, and do wondrous things; You are God alone." (Psalm 86:10) "Great things does He, which we cannot comprehend." (Job 37:5) "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things." (Psalm 72:18)

Not only is it God alone who does great things, but He does nothing else but great things. He is a great God, and He does great things. The least thing that He does is great.

The smallest flower, the tiniest and most slender blade of grass is the product of power greater than that possessed by all nations and kings on earth. Nothing less than infinite power could make it; but there is no power greater than infinite power; therefore in the smallest thing, that God has made,--a blade of grass, a grain of sand, yea, even a single atom,--the everlasting power and Divinity of God are displayed as really as in the sun, moon and stars. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and merciful in all His works." (Psalm 145:17,margin)

This is the rendering given in the text of several versions. Now since all the works of the Lord are merciful, and He does only great works, it follows that His mercy is as great as His works. His works are done in mercy; but they are the product of infinite power; so the mercy of the Lord is equal to His power, and identical with it. Therefore, "According to the height of the heaven above the earth, so great is His mercy." (Psalm 103:11,margin)

Literally, "so mighty is His mercy." Remember now that it was "Not by works of righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us." (Titus 3:5)

The power of this mercy to save us, is the power that is revealed in the whole universe. What comfort, then, there is for us in reading that: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before prepared, that we should walk in them. ... It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:10,13)

We know that His great mercy will do great things, not simply for us, but in us. Yea, He will enlarge us also. "I will run the way of your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart." (Psalm 119:32) "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; in your hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." (1 Chronicles 29:11-12) "It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. ... You have also given me the shield of your salvation; and your right hand has held me up, and your gentleness has made me great." (Psalm 18:32,35)

All this is the mercy of the Lord. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ (by grace are you saved), And has raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-6)

It is by the mercy of God that we are raised up with Christ, and made to sit in the heavenly places with Him, for His mercy is great above the heavens; but in the raising of Christ from the dead, and setting Him "at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, ... [God showed] the working of His mighty power." (Ephesians 1:20-21,19)

So again we see that the power of God is His mercy. All creation proclaims the power of God, and therefore the mercy by which He saves us from our sins.

It is wonderful indeed; so great is the field into which the Lord brings us, that it seems as though we were in a dream; nevertheless it is true, and "our mouth [may be] filled with laughter, and our tongue withsinging," (Psalm 126:2) and we can say: "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (Psalm 126:3)

O come to the Father
Through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory;
Great things He has done.
--Fanny Crosby, Hymn: To God Be the Glory, 1875.

--Present Truth, July 14, 1898--Psalm 111:2-3.

Chapter 163

Psalm 112: The Desire of the Wicked and Righteous

"The desire of the wicked shall perish;" (Psalm 112:10) "For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." (Psalm 37:10) "The world passes away, and the lust thereof." (1 John 2:17)

What a different prospect is placed before those who acknowledge Christ as Lord of all--the One in whom they live! "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:3-4)

What more could be asked for? Read further: "The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them." (Psalm 114:18-19) "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted." (Proverbs 10:24)

God is a most indulgent Father. He gives all His children everything that they desire. Yes, to the wicked, as well as to the just. How is it then, that there is such a difference? Because, "The desire of the righteous is only good; but the expectation of the wicked is wrath." (Proverbs 11:23)

The wicked desire everything except the Lord; but as nothing can exist without Him, it follows that when they get their desire, they have only destruction; while they who desire only the Lord have everything in Him.

Therefore when one's heart and flesh cries out for the living God,--when one says, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you;" (Psalm 73:25) the Lord will "Send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion; Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel." (Psalm 20:2,4)--Present Truth, August 8, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 112:10.

Chapter 164

Psalm 114: Our Way and God's Way

"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." (Psalm 114:17) "As for God, His way is perfect." (Psalm 18:30)

That is the character of God's way; what about our way? Here is God's answer: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." (Isaiah 55:9)

Since God's way is right, and our way is infinitely below it, it is plain that our way is all wrong, no matter how perfect it seems to us. "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 16:25)

It is clear enough, therefore, that the worst thing that can happen to us is to have our own way. If we do, we are sure to go wrong. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

If we attempt to regulate anything, and try to direct the affairs, so as to have them according to our ideas, the result will surely be failure. Therefore we need to pray: "Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." (Psalm 25:4)

Then comes the promise: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with my eye." (Psalm 32:8)

And the result is this: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in all law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:1-3)--Present Truth, April 3, 1902--Psalm 114:17.

Chapter 165

Psalm 115: Who Gets the Glory?

We often repeat the prayer, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory." (Psalm 115)

But we are quite likely to forget a part of it, at least. We feel willing that God should have the glory, instead of ourselves; but when it comes to the question of whether the glory--the credit--should be given to us or to some other person, we are quite inclined to claim it for ourselves. We seem to think that if the Lord is not to receive the glory, we might as well have it.

But we should remember that the glory--all the glory--belongs to the Lord, and that we have no right to it, even if He does not receive the glory due unto His name. We have no right to stolen property, even though our refusal of it does not restore it to the owner.

So when we say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name give glory," (Psalm 115:1) we should hold to the first part of it even though somebody else, and not the Lord, gets the credit of that which the Lord has done by us, and not by that other.

To arrive at this state however, involves the complete crucifixion of human nature.--Present Truth, May 17, 1900--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 115:1.

Chapter 166

Psalm 116: The Nearness of God

The Nearness of God

Friday, August 12

"I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications." (Psalm 116:1)

That is good reason for loving Him; and that is reason for everybody to love Him.

Perhaps the reason why more do not love the Lord is that so few really believe that God hears prayer. They go through the form of prayer, it is true, but it is too often a mere form, without real expectation and positive certainty that God will hear them.

To most people God seems so far away that there is room for much possibility that He may miss hearing many prayers. But he who knows from His wondrous working that God is near, cannot doubt that He hears prayer, and must therefore love Him.

Continually Calling

Sabbath, August 13

"Because He has inclined His ear unto me. therefore I call upon Him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:2)

Many misunderstand the parable in Luke 18:1-8, imagining that the unjust judge represents God. But God is not unjust, and in the parable Christ says that God will "speedily" avenge those who cry day and night unto Him. Someone asks: "What need is there of crying day and night to God, if He answers at once?"

The answer is plain. When people find one who relieves their wants and supplies their need promptly and freely, they are very sure to apply to him again and again.

This is just what the Lord desires; it is because He wants to have people call on Him continually, that He gives so readily and so abundantly.

Dealing with the Sorrows of Death

Sunday, August 14

"The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." (Psalm 116:3)

Nothing is too hard for the Lord:

• He delights in difficulties.

• He takes the utmost wrath of men and binds it about Him as a garment, using it for the accomplishment of His designs.

• He brings forth light out of darkness, and strength out of weakness, and

• From the pains and the pit of death He brings forth life everlasting.

So the fact that one is encompassed by the sorrows and pains of death is no evidence that God has left him, and no reason for ceasing to call on Him.

"If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there." (Psalm 139:8)

Deliverance from Death

Monday, August 15

"Then I called upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, deliver my soul." (Psalm 116:4)

This text is well illustrated in the case of Jonah. He was in the depths, and that because of his own perverseness; but "out of the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2) he cried unto the Lord, and was speedily answered and delivered.

Better still is it illustrated in the case of Him who carried in His own body the sins of the world, who cried "unto Him that was able to save Him from death" (Hebrews 5:7), and was brought up from the grave, an example of what God desires to do for all men.

The Lord Preserves the Simple

Tuesday, August 16

"The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me." (Psalm 116:6)

Read this verse in connection with the preceding one. Many who would not dream of questioning God's righteousness, do often doubt that He forgives and saves them. But the fact that God does this, is given as proof of His righteousness. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

It is "the simple" that God upholds; that is, those who are single in mind and heart, and not double-minded. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8)

Why? Because he trusts now in God, and now in himself. But a man who trusts in God alone is firm as a rock.

Drawn by the Lord's Bounty

Wednesday, August 17

"Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." (Psalm 116:7)

It would seem to be a most natural thing for men to return to and remain with the One who deals bountifully with them; yet they do not, because they do not recognize God in His gifts. God says: "The ox knows His owner, and the ass His master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider." (Isaiah 1:3)

So the professedly wise man has less knowledge than the dullest of brutes because he does not get acquainted with the One who daily feeds him.

But still God continues His good works, that we may return and find rest, and in returning and rest find salvation.

God Constantly Saves

Thursday, August 18

"For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." (Psalm 116:8)

This is the bountiful way in which the Lord has dealt with us.

But there are so many to whom this is but a theory or doctrine. They believe, as a matter of history, that God raised Christ from the dead, but they do not realize that God has saved their souls from death.

Nevertheless, God has saved every living soul from death. Whether or not they accept the salvation is another matter. The miracle of the resurrection is enacted every day in bringing thousands to birth, and in breathing the breath of life into millions more. Then "let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psalm 150:6), and in so doing find salvation.

Without Money, Without Price

Friday, August 10

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12)

There is not a soul on earth that does not with good reason ask this question, for God is daily leading everybody to benefits that cannot be measured. And if they cannot be measured, they certainly cannot be paid for.

What shall we render for them? Nothing, except make such use of them that God can see that we appreciate them too much to squander them.

We pay for the things that are of little or no value; but the best possessions come to us as a free gift, because they are beyond price.

Multiplied by Giving

Sabbath, August 20

"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." (Psalm 116:13)

Here is the answer to the question asked: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12)

What shall we do? Take what He gives and ask for more! What a wonderful way of doing business; it is truly not after the manner of men.

And when we have paid for what God has given us, by asking more, then what? Why, the new gift has laid us under double obligations, and so we must now take twice as much as before, and so on in geometrical progression.

And to eternity there will be no diminution in the supply, because life and love multiply by giving.

Immortal Love, forever full,
Forever flowing free;
Forever shared, forever whole,
A never-ebbing sea!
--John G. Whittier, Hymn: We May Not Climb the Heavenly Steeps, 1856.

The Loss of a Valued Instrument

Sunday, August 21

"Precious in the sight of Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

"Precious" comes from "price;" the precious metals are those that are most costly. The Hebrew word in this place means costly, and is so rendered in some versions. "Costly in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

The Lord's saints are the instruments of His righteousness; and to lose one's instrument, is always an expensive matter. When the harvest is plenteous, the laborers few, the husbandman cannot afford to lose any of his workers. So every saint that dies in this time, when the work is to be cut short and closed up, is a distinct loss to God. Be sure that He himself will not lightly lay any of them aside.

The service of God contains a promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

Servant of the Lord

Monday, August 22

"O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, and the son of your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." (Psalm 116:16)

Who may say this? Everybody who yields himself to the Lord, to be His servants; for: "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are." (Romans 6:16)

Everyone, therefore, is free to determine his own standing. And then what? He is a free man; for the Lord's service is liberty. He is free from the bondage of the service of sin, because: "No man can serve two masters." (Matthew 6:24)

When therefore Satan, the old taskmaster, comes about claiming us as his servants, and trying to drive us back into bondage, we are truly to declare to the Lord that we are His servants, to assert our liberty in Him and to claim His protection; and we may be sure that the Lord will not neglect His own.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, August 1904--Psalm 116:1-16.

Chapter 167

Psalm 116: Freed from Bondage

"O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, and the sonof your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds." (Psalm 116:16)

That is the language of the soul that has learned that: "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." (Psalm 116:5)

But the loosing of bonds is the work of the Holy Spirit; "For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17)

The Spirit of the Lord proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." (Isaiah 61:1)

But, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:14-16)

Therefore as soon as we recognize the fact that God has delivered us, so that we may serve Him, and we acknowledge that we are His servants, and free, He says, "Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:7)

When the returning prodigal said: "I have sinned...make me as one of your hired servants," (Luke 15:19) the father said: "This my son was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:24)--Present Truth, April 25, 1895--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 116:16.

Chapter 168

Psalm 118: Whom Shall We Trust?

"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." (Psalm 118:8-9) "Thus says the Lord: Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadsout her roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

Why is the man cursed that trusts in man? Why should the Lord deal so hardly with him? The Lord does not deal hardly with him. That statement, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man," (Jeremiah 17:5) is no more a threat than is the declaration that the man who puts his hand in the fire will be burned, or that the man who leans upon a broken reed will fall. It cannot be otherwise. See why it is that the man who trusts in man, even though it be himself, is sure to come to grief: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:5)

Not a very safe thing to trust in, is it? Nor is that all. Even though one’s intentions are the best, his power is nothing.

"Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22)

This suggests the reason, given in Psalm 146, why we should not put our trust even in the great ones of earth: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:3-4) "Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish; for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and

will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God; but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds." (Jeremiah 5:4-5)

Then is it not safe to trust in what the wise men of the earth, and the doctors of the law, say? No; it is dangerous to the highest degree. "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity; you have eaten the fruit of lies; because you did trust in your way, in the multitude of your mighty men." (Hosea 10:13)

There is no wise man who is wiser than Solomon; but: "A greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:42)

Jesus Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)

And He is nearer and more available for counsel than any man can be. Trust Him. "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgments as the noonday." (Psalm 37:5-6)

Psalm 146: "Happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his help, whosehope is in the Lord his God; Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keeps truth for ever." (Psalm 37:5-6) "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 124:8) "Trust in Him at all times; you people pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." (Psalm 62:8)--Present Truth, August 11, 1898--Psalm 118:8-9.

Chapter 169

Psalm 118: The Day of Salvation

A subscriber asks, "What day is the psalmist speaking of in the twenty-fourth verse of the 118th Psalm?"

The text is easily answered if we consider the context, which is as follows:

"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. I will praise You; for You have heard me, and are become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stoneof the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:19-24)

The subject under consideration is salvation, for which the psalmist is praising the Lord. This appears still more clearly when we read the entire chapter. He recognizes the fact that salvation comes through Christ, by saying: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner." (Psalm 118:22)

The fact that the subject of salvation is under consideration, and that he says, "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord," (Psalm 118:19) is evidence that the psalmist is not speaking of any special literal day, but that he uses the word "day" in the sense of a period of time, as in Proverbs 24:10; "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10) Ecclesiastes 7:14, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also has set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." (Ecclesiastes 7:14) and other places.

Just as there is no special day of the week when men may have prosperity or adversity, so there is no special day when men may enter the gates of righteousness or may seek salvation. Ever since the fall, men could enter the

gates of righteousness at any time they chose. Thus it will be until probation ends.

And so the day spoken of here by the psalmist, is the day of salvation of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 6:2, for he says: "For he says, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

That this is not limited to any particular day, nor even to what is called the Christian dispensation, may be seen from the fact that these words were written seven hundred years before Christ, and are quoted by Paul: "Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you: and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." (Isaiah 49:8)

Again, the day spoken of is the day in which the stone which the builders rejected becomes the headstone of the corner. It is the day of salvation, that is, the whole period of time in which God's grace is manifest toward sinners. Christ is the head of the corner, because the entire plan of salvation centers in him. Paul says to the Ephesians: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." (Ephesians 2:19-20)

This shows that Christ was the corner-stone in the days of the apostles and prophets, and this is in harmony with what Paul says: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Again Christ refers to the same day to which David does where he said of the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56)

Abraham saw the day of salvation, and entered into the gates of righteousness. The gospel was preached unto him and he rejoiced in it as did David. To say that John 8:56 refers to a certain day of the week, would make nonsense of the text; but no more than it would to limit Psalm 118:24 in like manner.

With the above explanation it is unnecessary to enter into an argument to show that the day to which David refers is not the first day of the week. Indeed, that has been shown already. It is not on Sunday or upon any other special day of the week alone that men can enter into the gates of righteousness and rejoice because of salvation.

But "now"--that is, the present time, this period of probation--"now is the accepted time;" "now is the day of salvation." Therefore Paul says: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)--Signs of the Times, January 27, 1887--Psalm 118:19-24.

Chapter 170

Psalm 118: God's Ways Opposite to Man's

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (Psalm 118:22) "[Christ] is despised and rejected of men." (Isaiah 53:3)

Yet He is exalted above all, King of kings, and Lord of lords. That is the way God works, and it is because of that that we may rejoice. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. In this is our hope." (1 Corinthians 1:27-28)--Present Truth, August 8, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 118:22.

Chapter 171

Psalm 119: Willing, But Unable

"Make me to go in the path of your commandments; for therein do I delight." (Psalm 119:35)

Even though we have learned the law of God well enough to love it and to delight in it, we may still not be able to do it. The Apostle Paul thus describes his experience before he knew Christ: "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find than a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:18-23)

This is the condition of everybody who is awakened to conviction of sin, but who has not yet learned to yield to the Spirit. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Galatians 5:17)

This is the case of the "double-minded man," who is "unstable in all his ways." James 1:8. He cannot go straight.

In such case we have only to pray the prayer quoted at the beginning. God is anxious to guide us, if we are willing to let Him. We are His kingdom, but His place has been usurped by: "[The evil] spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

When we say to Him, "Yours is the kingdom, and the power," (Matthew 6:13) we are actually saying: "You have the right to do as You will with your own; I give You full liberty to rule in me, and exercise your power in me."

He will make us go in the path of His commandments. (Psalm 119:35) He is able to put us in the right way, and to keep us from stumbling in it. He works in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt is proof of His power to do this. When they "wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way," (Psalm 107:4) and in their trouble cried unto the Lord, "He led them forth by the right way." (Psalm 107:7)

He says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. ... I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by the arms." (Hosea 11:1,3)

What a sweet picture of God acting as a nurse to His ignorant, helpless children.--Present Truth, December 6, 1900--Psalm 119:35.

Chapter 172

Psalm 119: Good Company

The Psalmist said to the Lord, "I am a companion of all them that fear You, and of them that keep your precepts." (Psalm 119:63)

A man is known by the company he chooses. One of the chief qualifications of a bishop is that he shall be "a lover of good men." (Titus 1:8) "He that walks with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20)--Present Truth, June 13, 1895--Psalm 119:63.

Chapter 173

Psalm 119: Some of God's Faithful Servants

"For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides. They abide this day according to your ordinances: for all thingsare your servants." (Psalm 119:89-91)

Everything that God has made is His servant, and does His will. Every created thing, except fallen man, shows forth the praise of God.

"All your works shall praise You, O Lord; and your saints shall bless You." (Psalm 145:10)

It is from the inanimate creation that God's saints are to learn how the truest service of praise is given to Him. They are to be, like the heavens, the rain, the hail, and the snow, the bearers of God's word, allowing it to have perfect freedom of action in them, to use them as it will. Thus they praise Him; for we read again: "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights. Praise Him, all His angels: praise Him all His hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him all you stars of light. Praise Him you heavens of heavens, and you waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commands, and they were created. He has also made a decree for ever and ever: He has made a decree which none shall transgress. Praise the Lord from the earth, you dragons, and all deeps: Fire and hail, snow and vapor; stormy wind, fulfilling His word: Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of theearth; Both young men and maidens; old men and children; Let them praise the name of the Lord; for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven." (Psalm 148:1-13)

From these passages, together with the familiar one in the 19th Psalm, which says that: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1) and that: "Their line is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the

end of the world," (Psalm 19:4) we learn that true praise to God consists in being just what He has made us to be; and that when the Word which made us, and which dwells in us to uphold us, is not in any way transgressed, that Word is proclaimed. We learn also that God's servants, whether animate or inanimate, abide only as they conform to His Word. "The Word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah 40:8)

And therefore it is that, "he that does the will of God abides for ever." (1 John 2:17)

If there were a star in the heavens that insisted, like man, in having its own way, and that should start off in a path of its own, different from that which God has appointed for it, all can readily see that its perverseness would lead to its speedy destruction; and its ruin would involve others as well.

So rebellious men, who at the last come to nothing, so that they "be as though they had not been," (Obadiah 1:16) are destroyed by their own way,--by their refusal to be guided and controlled by the Word of the Lord. "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the backsliding [turning back] of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkens unto me shall dwell securely, and shall be quiet without fear of evil." (Proverbs 1:29-33)

People often tell us that they are sure they could not live if they did exactly what the Bible says. The Judgment will reveal the fact that they cannot live if they do not do as it says. A merchant was asked, on his beginning to keep the Sabbath of the Lord when the light came to him: "How can you afford to close your place of business on the seventh day?"

His simple reply was, "I cannot afford not to."

What a blessed thing it would be if all men would see that since they have life only by God's Word, their only hope of continued existence is conformity to that Word.

Read again the extract from Psalm 148, and note that it is not alone the "stormy wind" that fulfills God's Word, but the "fire and hail, snow and vapors." "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word." (Psalm 148:8) "He sends forth His commandment upon earth; His Word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the hoar frost like ashes." (Psalm 147:15-16)

The snow and rain and hail on the earth do but bring the word of God to the earth. They come laden with God's blessing,--His word of truth,--and when they return they carry back the earth's response,--the fruits of the Word. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but [except it] waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

The budding flowers at springtime and the ripened fruit of autumn are but new forms of the Word which the snow of winter brought to the earth. They are some of "the treasures of the snow." (Job 38:22)

But God's mercy, that endures for ever, is manifested sometimes in wrath, in the destruction of the haters of His law; and the limitless treasures of snow and hail in His storehouses are to be drawn upon in the execution of judgment.

Among the plagues by which He convinced Pharaoh and the people in Egypt that He was God, were "hail, and fire mingled with the hail." "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it

became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field." (Exodus 9:23-25)

The fire and hail and stormy wind fulfilled His word then, and so they will at the last day. He has reserved them "against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war." (Job 38:23)

So we see that the same word and the same agents that make the earth fruitful like Eden, can also, if not received, accomplish its overthrow.

We have the choice either of bearing the precious fruits of the word, or of being consumed by it. Which shall it be?--Present Truth, January 29, 1903--Psalm 119:89-91.

Chapter 174

Psalm 119: A Shining Light

"Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105) "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light." (Proverbs 6:28)

This is true of God's Word as a whole, but it is equally true of every portion of it. One does not need to eat all the corn there is in the world; in order to have life; there is life in every grain. So there is life in every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, for each word is living and active; it is life.

But the life is the light. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:1,4)

In every sentence of the Bible there is something to enlighten us. From the seemingly most obscure and meaningless statements, there will flash forth the most glorious light, if we but consider them attentively.

More than this, these very obscure passages, some of them seeming to be utterly irrelevant, will give light that will make a host of other things shine with increased brilliancy.

Do you not know that a single ray of light flashed into a dark room will reveal everything that is in it? Let the sun but for a single moment flash out through a rift in a thick cloud, and the whole landscape will be transfigured, and objects that were before unnoticed will stand out in hold relief.

So from a single text of Scripture, to which careful, earnest attention is given, will often come light that will flash through the entire Bible, making everything appear new. Everybody who has given any real study to the Bible must have had some experience of this kind.

Therefore let no one lightly esteem any portion of the Bible; and let no one think it a waste of time to spend hours, and days, and months, and even years, in meditating upon and studying a small section of it.

If one will do this, not neglecting of course to read the rest of the Bible, he will acquire such a knowledge of the whole as will not possibly be gained in any other way.--Present Truth, May 4, 1899--Psalm 119:105.

Chapter 175

Psalm 119: Getting the Light

"Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ... The opening of your words gives light." (Psalm 119;105,130)

This is not a mere figure of speech, but an actual fact. Light does come from the word of God, because it is a light. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." (Psalm 33:6)

God said, "Let there be light; and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)

As soon as His word went into the darkness, light came forth, even the light by which we are able to walk and work. This being the case, it is no wonder that the word of the Lord gives mental and spiritual light. There is light in every word of God, because light is life, and we are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. "Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Yet the experience of every one that regards the word of the Lord is that more light seems to come in from some portions of it than from others. Some parts seem to have no light at all.

If we will think a moment, we shall find the reason for this. It is from the portions with which we are very familiar, that the most light seems to come. It is those passages which we have read many times, which seem like old acquaintances, and which we can recall without the book, from which the light streams so brightly. It is from these that new light ever and anon breaks forth.

This should show us that the reason why we do not get light from other passages of Scripture, is that we have not studied them so as to become familiar with them. It is true that there are many which seem to give their

light very clearly on first reading; yet even these reveal much more the more they are studied. But there are others so obscure that a first glance does not reveal any light.

When we look to the sky there are certain heavenly bodies that give us much light. But there are many others so far distant that no perceptible light comes to us from them. There are stars so far distant that they cannot be discerned even by the most powerful telescope. And yet this earth does receive a measure of light from them.

One may ask how we know this, if they cannot be seen even through the telescope. Their existence is revealed by photography. But we must not suppose that their photograph is taken by any "snap shot." Even the long, tedious sitting that was required by the old-style Daguerreotype would be insufficient to leave the slightest trace upon the plate.

The astronomer must direct his instrument to a certain portion of the heavens, and keep it steady there, having a bright star as his guide. For many hours must it remain in one position, until the light from those distant suns accumulates upon the plate, and reveals their presence. Then a multitude of tiny spots of light shows that in the infinite depths of space there is light for the one who has but the patience to wait for it.

That is the way that the astronomer studies the heavens. He patiently looks into their depths, until the light is revealed to him. Even so should we study the Bible. We do not study the Bible by talking about it, but by looking at it.

The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, even the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us: and therefore the infinite depth of the heavens is but an illustration of the infinite depths of God's word. "O Lord, how great are your works! and your thoughts are very deep." (Psalm 112:5)

Let the mind be open to the impress of the Holy Spirit, and continued meditation upon the word itself will reveal duties that are not dreamed of by the careless reader.--Present Truth, October 11, 1894--Psalm 119:105,130.

Chapter 176

Psalm 119: True Learning

The Psalmist has said: "The entrance of your words gives light: it gives understanding unto the simple." (Psalm 119:130)

The words of the Lord are our wisdom, and theirs is the wisdom which shall not pass away.

He who is learned in the Word of the Lord has gained that which will make him wise, not only for time but for all eternity. Such a one has indeed chosen the good thing which will never be taken from him.

His is a learning which will survive all vicissitudes, and bring him well furnished to begin his studies in the Divine university of eternity.--Present Truth, July 16, 1896--Psalm 119:130.

Chapter 177

Psalm 119: Keeping the Peace

The Psalmist writes, "Great peace have they which love your law; and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165)

How do they obtain this peace? The Saviour said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace give I unto you." (John 14:27)

He gives to His followers the peace that He has himself. They have but to take it, according to the exhortation, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." (Colossians 3:15)

The only obstacle to this will be some other ruler in the heart, namely, self. Where self rules, there will not be peace; but the peace of God will rule wherever it is let in.

Being God's peace, it has in it His power and His joy. It is infinite, and so "passes all understanding, [and it will] keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

That which controls the mind, will control the body. So there are no persons in the world so peaceful and so truly keepers of the peace, as Christians.--Present Truth, July 4, 1895--Psalm 119:165.

Chapter 178

Psalm 121: God Greater Than the Hills

God Greater Than the Hills

Tuesday, August 23

"Shall I lift up my eyes to the hills? whence should my help come?" (Psalm 121:1,margin)

The marginal reading is to be preferred; because our help comes from God, and not from the hills.

"Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." (Jeremiah 3:23)

The ancient heathen built their temples on the hills, but no help could come from them, because the gods that were in those temples had no power. They were on the hills: but God, whose temple was also on a hill, is above the hills.

God, by the strength with which He is girded, sets the mountains fast (Psalm 65:6); but the mountains cannot impart strength.

The Source of Strength

Wednesday, August 24

"My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:2)

Our need is too great and too pressing to allow us to be content with any secondary source of strength, if there were any such. We must draw from the original source of strength.

The mountains and all things that God has made reveal His everlasting power and divinity, but they cannot impart any of it. They can only declare the glory of God, directing us to their Maker and ours, as the one who has help to supply for all need. He is worthy of eternal thanks, because: "[He] is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

A Firm Foundation

Thursday, August 25

"He will not suffer your foot to be moved." (Psalm 121:3)

Who is it that will not suffer our foot to be moved? It is God, who made "the everlasting hills," setting them fast by His strength.

In His strength we may be even more immovable than they: for the mountains shall be carried into the sea: but God says that though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, His lovingkindness that holds us up shall not depart from us.

When the mountains and the hills move out of their places, it will be good to be able to rest in the hand that can both set them fast and move them.

The Unsleeping Keeper

Friday, August 26

"He that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:3-4)

There are two words here, "slumber," and "sleep." The last one means to be asleep, while the first one means: "to fall asleep from weariness or lassitude. The primary idea seems to be that of nodding."--Gesenius.

This God never does.

"The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary." (Isaiah 40:28)

God does not nod over His work; His hands never relax through weariness, and allow what they are holding to drop. How wonderful! And because God wakes, we can sleep, and be sure of waking.

Kept Constantly by God

Sabbath, August 27

"The Lord is your keeper." (Psalm 121:5)

Your keeper, remember; not your jailer. Have you ever thought what you should do if the Lord should fall asleep? Of course you would never do anything again.

Have you ever thought how it is that you are kept alive during the night, and wakened from your unconscious condition in the morning? The sleeping man is dead in every respect except that he breathes. He lives, but he is certainly doing nothing then for his living.

How is this breath of life continued to us, when we are awake, as well as when we are asleep? By no other means than that by which the first breath was given to Adam.

Everyone thinks of God as very near to Adam when He made him; but if God, whose hands have fashioned us as truly as they did Adam, were not as close to us as to the first man when he was made, we could not live a moment. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

A Keeper and a Shade

Sunday, August 28

"The Lord is your keeper: the Lord is your shade upon your righthand." (Psalm 121:5)

There is another wonder: "The Lord God is a sun," (Psalm 84:11) and He is at the same time a shield from the sun: "The Lord God is a ... shield." (Psalm 84:11) "[He is] a consuming fire," (Hebrews 12:29) and He is also "the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 2:13)

This is beyond all comprehension; but the truth of it we may grasp and clearly perceive when we remember that all things come from Him. The earth itself is the offspring of God, as truly as we are, who come from the earth. "In Him were all things created ... and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17)

So He is both sun and shade to us, indicating that in Him we get everything in exactly the right proportion. Safely we may...

Sit down beneath His shadow,
And rest with great delight;
The faith that now beholds Him
Is pledge of future sight.
--Frances R. Havergal, Hymn: Sit Down Beneath His Shadow.

Protection from the Elements

Monday, August 29

"The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." (Psalm 121:6)

Every Bible student involuntarily thinks of the description of "the seven last plagues" (Revelation 16) when the sun will have "power to scorch men with fire," and is glad of this promise. God will then be a shade for His people.

When the wicked are destroyed and the righteous dwell in "everlasting burnings," (Isaiah 33:14) "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge." (Isaiah 4:6)

But why not bring the application nearer? The Lord is the same now that He will ever be. Then why should any of His servants now suffer from sunstroke? The Bible says: "The Lord is your shade upon your right hand." (Psalm 121:5)

Is He? See how this does not indicate a way of enduring the great heat of summer without discomfort.

Preserved from Spiritual and Physical Evils

Tuesday, August 30

"The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve yoursoul." (Psalm 121:7)

Blessed promise! Why should we limit it? We believe that He is able to keep us from all spiritual evil, and we must believe that He is just as able to preserve us from physical evils. But whatever God is able to do for His people, He has done. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4) "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to lifeand godliness." (2 Peter 1:3)

If all good men had always trusted God as much for their life as they did for godliness, the history of the world would have been different.

And a change must even yet take place, because every promise of God must be practically demonstrated among men before the end comes.

A Constant Companion

Wednesday, August 31

"The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Psalm 121:8) "What shall we say to these things. If God be for us, who can beagainst us? He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32)

He cannot do otherwise, because "In Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17)

Then let us accept all His gifts in the spirit in which He has given them and for the purpose for which He designed them, and life will nevermore be "a burden," but a joy.--Medical Missionary, Daily Bread, August 1904--Psalm 121:1-8.

Chapter 179

Psalm 121: Look Up

The Lord does not want people to look down. If they do, like Bunyan's man with the muck rack, they will see only the straws, the sticks, and the rubbish of earth, and not the crown that is above them.

God is in Heaven; but that which is of the earth is earthy. By beholding we become changed. So then if we look down, we become groveling in our disposition; if we look up, we may behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image.

Here is an argument against despondency. The discouraged despondent man hangs his head. But when he does that he can see only himself, and so he adds to his despondency. Not only so, but by beholding only that which is imperfect, he becomes more and more assimilated to that which is imperfect.

Satan makes an easy prey of the doubting, despondent man. How much better to say with the psalmist: "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

Besides this we are expressly enjoined to look up at this time. After speaking of the signs of his coming, Christ said: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh." (Luke 21:28)

Who are living so that they can daily rejoice in hope of the glory of God?--Signs of the Times, January 7, 1889--Psalm 121:1-2.

Chapter 180

Psalm 121: Our Refuge

"Shall I lift up my eyes unto the hills? From whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

Popular hymnology, based upon the common rendering, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help," has made the hills--the supposed abodes of the deities of the heathen mythology--a source of help and hope for the Christian. But in God alone is his help. As the prophet Jeremiah has said, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." (Jeremiah 3:23)

God is the help of those that look unto Him. He says, "Look unto me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22)

But it is in vain to seek for salvation without looking to Him. We must know where He is, and not be looking to some place where God is not; for there are many places which appear to be the sanctuary of Omnipotence, which are but the deceptions of that evil one whose aim is to turn man's eyes away from God, to look unto himself.

All earthly sources of help are of this kind. There is no help for the sinner but in creative power; and therefore his help comes only "from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:2)

Many are the men that look up to the hills, to the groves and the temples of their pretended deities, but they do not experience the working of creative power. Only God can send creative power into the heart, and answer the longing of the sin-burdened soul for a new creation. Only He can answer the prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

This is the power that we feel when we look to the right Source of help. If we do not experience it, we are not looking as we should.

The hills and the mountains shall melt and disappear, together with all that is earthly and of human origin, and in that day God will be the hope and refuge of His people. In that day it will be said, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

The prophecy is about to be fulfilled which foretells the transfer of the kingdoms of this earth into the hands of Him who shall "break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed you judges of the earth." (Psalm 2:9-10)

Cease to trust in the power of man, and look to Him who is the Source of all authority and power, and the Refuge of His children. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." (Psalm 2:12)--Present Truth, September 28, 1893--Psalm 121:1-2.

Chapter 181

Psalm 121: Sleeping in Safety

How dare a person go to sleep at night, if he doesn't believe in God? If he doesn't believe in God's constant care for him, how dare he trust himself out of his own care? It would seem as though he would want to sit up and watch himself, to be sure that he did not stop breathing during the night.

Who is there that has not really had some such feeling as this at some time? It is safe to say that there are very few who do not know the sensation of feeling afraid to go to sleep, lest they should not wake up again. It is not a pleasant feeling, is it?

Truly, the only safety for anybody in sleep is in the Lord who "wakes and watches." "He that keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor deep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade upon your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." (Psalm 121:3-6)

Only because the Lord keeps awake, is it possible for us to go to sleep and to awake. But for His watchfulness we should literally "sleep the sleep that knows no waking."

Why is it necessary for the Lord to keep awake, in order that we may sleep? It surely is necessary, else He would not take such pains to assure us that He, our keeper, will not slumber nor sleep. He does nothing that is not necessary.

But if the idea that so many have were true, that God has "set certain laws in operation," in accordance with which everything regulates itself, as it were, then He certainly could go to sleep occasionally, and leave the universe to run along by itself for a time.

Even the man who is minding an engine in a huge factory can doze off once in a while, when the fires are well and the boilers are full, for the

machinery once set in motion will run by itself. If he sleep too long, however, woe to the people dependent on his watchfulness! But God sleeps not. Of His vineyard--His people--He says: "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isaiah 27:3)

The reason why is that He has not machines, but living creatures, to tend. He must supply them with life; and life is something that cannot be stored up, but must be fresh every moment. So, "Moment by moment I'm under His care."--Daniel W. Whittle, Hymn: Moment by Moment, 1893.

And moment by moment He breathes into our nostrils the breath of life, just as He did for Adam in the beginning.

What a mighty God is ours! Think of the greatness of Him who personally supplied breath to every living creature. For every creature born since Adam, God has moment by moment been repeating the operation of breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. And yet this does not exhaust His energies, nor tax His time, but He has sufficient of both to give personal attention to the innumerable worlds, keeping them all in their proper orbits. Who cannot trust Him?

Beneath His watchful eye
His saints securely dwell;
That hand that bears creation up
Shall guard His children well.
--Philip Doddridge, Hymn: How Gentle God’s Commands, 1755.

The writer can never forget the sweet content that came when he first learned to trust the Lord over night. He cannot forget it, because it continues still. The man who tumbles into bed and goes to sleep without a thought of fear, any more than the beasts, nor any more thought of God than they, does not know anything about the joy of life. That comes only when one knows whom he believes, and who is his keeper, and consciously rests in the arms of God as a babe in the arms of its mother.

To such a one the joy of childhood continues to old age; and if childhood has been robbed of its rightful heritage of joy, old age may find it. "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep; for You, Lord, alone make me dwell in safety." (Psalm 4:8)--Present Truth, August 1, 1901--Psalm 121:3-6.

Chapter 182

Psalm 122: Joy in God's House

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together; Where the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, for a testimony unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love you. Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good." (Psalm 122:1-9)

One great mistake that many make in reading the Scriptures is that of supposing that the writers of the Bible were as ignorant of Divine things as are the majority of people in these days.

People do not put it in just that way, but that is what they think, nevertheless. They do not seem to think that the patriarchs and prophets saw anything above or beyond their immediate surroundings, and what their eyes could see. And that is why so few learn what they ought to from the Bible.

They do not realize that the holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that by the Spirit they saw things that are hidden from the natural vision. These writings are designed to open our eyes, to give us spiritual sight, so that we may see what those men saw--the reality of things.

Since the fall of Adam nothing on this earth has been as it should be, nor as it will be when righteousness shall have wrought restoration.

"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Now the Bible deals with eternal things, with things that are real. Through the veil that is spread over the face of all the earth, the prophets of

old saw the world to come, even as we should. So all their calculations were made with reference to eternity, and not with reference to a few short years.

The changing seasons were, as they should be to us, only evidences of the power of God, by which He will change this earth and all of its inhabitants who are willing to be changed into His image. "Now we see through a glass, darkly." (1 Corinthians 13:12)

This earth, with all that pertains to it, is but a shadow of real things. But if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we shall have fellowship with Him, and shall see the inheritance of the saints in light. (1 John 1:7; Colossians 1:12)

The tabernacle built by Moses, as well as the temple afterwards built in Jerusalem by Solomon, was only a feeble representation of real things in heaven. From between the cherubim upon the ark of the covenant, the glory of God was revealed, and from there He spoke unto the children of Israel. "And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:22)

But, "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." (Psalm 11:4)

The true sanctuary is one built without hands, "which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Hebrews 8:2) "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." (Jeremiah 17:12)

It was to this place that God designed to lead the children of Israel immediately on their deliverance from Egypt. In the song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea, we read, "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." (Exodus 15:17)

But Israel did not believe, and would not trust the Lord. In their hearts they turned back to Egypt, so that they never gained what the Lord had designed for them.

• Instead of coming to the reality, they had only the shadow.

• Instead of coming to the real sanctuary, they had all their lives only a pattern of it, and one in which they were not permitted to enter at all.

• Instead of being a kingdom of priests, every one of them entitled to minister before the Lord in the secret places of the Most High, only one family of one tribe were permitted to serve as priests even in the typical sanctuary.

Yet there were always some who saw beyond the shadow, and who lived in the joy of the reality. Such were the prophets and holy men of God. They well knew that the temple in which they worshiped was altogether too small to be a real house of God, "[Who] dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will you build me says the Lord; or what is the place of my rest?" (Acts 7:48-49) "Thus says Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will you build unto me? and what place shall be my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1) "But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27)

Consequently when they spoke of the temple of the Lord, they had in mind the final temple and not the mere shadow which their natural eyes saw. Not only so, but they saw a new Jerusalem. Old Jerusalem was never large enough to hold the new temple of the Lord. That temple contains more angels waiting for the commands of the Lord, than there were ever inhabitants in Jerusalem. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." (Revelation 5:11)

So when the prophets spoke of Jerusalem, and praised its beauty, it was the Jerusalem restored and made new, that they had before their sanctified vision. True, there was a promise from the Lord, that if the people would serve Him in truth, keeping His Sabbath, the city should stand for ever "And it shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, says the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever." (Jeremiah 17:24-25)

But that very promise carried with it the promise of restoration; for no city built by man could stand for ever. It was a part of the promise made to Abraham, to which we "look for new and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13)

It was with this in view that the psalmist wrote: "But You, O Lord, shall endure for ever. You shall arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come. For your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth your glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." (Psalm 102:12-16)

The stones in which the servants of the Lord take pleasure are not the old, moss-covered stones of the old Jerusalem, but "all manner of precious stones," (Revelation 21:19) with which the real city is garnished. "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." (Revelation 21:19-20)

Isaiah had a vision of this restored and beautified city, when he wrote: "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your

stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established; you shall be far fromoppression; for you shall not fear; and from terror; for it shall not come near you." (Isaiah 54:11-14)

This is the city, and these are the stones, in which the servants of the Lord take pleasure. It is this city, and not the Old Jerusalem, some remnants of which are still standing, that the psalmist always had reference to when he broke forth in transports over its beauty: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." (Psalm 48:1-3)

This city is the home of God's people: "Our citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians 3:21)

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

Therefore they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared for them a city." (Hebrews 11:13-16)

The city is already prepared, and only waits for the preparation of its inhabitants. To it all the faithful now come and worship. For: "You are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first born, which arewritten in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus

the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel." (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Toward this city and sanctuary we are to turn our eyes when we pray. We are to "Lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens," (Lamentations 3:41) even as David, when he said, "I lift up my hands toward your holy oracle." (Psalm 28:2)

It is to this city that the tribes go up; for on the twelve gates are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. "And [the city] had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 21:12)

In it there is perfect unity; for where in our version we read that: "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together," (Psalm 122:3) the Jewish translation by Rabbi Leeser has it: "Jerusalem, which is built as a city wherein all associate together."

In this city, this real dwelling-place of God, there is joy: "Blessed are they that dwell in your house; they will be still praising You. ... For a day in your courts is better than a thousand. I had rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:4-10,margin) "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish inthe courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat andflourishing." (Psalm 92:13-14)

Then come to the house of the Lord. There we may abide, not merely for a day, nor occasionally, but from now throughout eternity. "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

Here there is safety. Here also there is joy, "fullness of joy, [and] pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

Peace is within its walls, and prosperity within its palaces, so that we may be rich and happy even though we are poor and afflicted.

Faith makes us inhabitants of that glorious city even now, although our bodies are confined to this sin-cursed earth. But soon the Lord will come, to take us to himself, and then, our bodies made spiritual, we shall with our eyes see that which these natural eyes are not able to look upon. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of your throne; mercy and truth shall go before your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance. In your name shall they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:14-16)--Present Truth, September 21, 1899--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Psalm 122:1-9.

Chapter 183

Psalm 125: Freed From the Dominion of Sin

The promise is that: "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity." (Psalm 125:3)

A rod or scepter is the emblem of authority and power; it is the badge of the king. The promise is therefore the same as that of: "Sin shall not have dominion over you." (Romans 6:14)

The scepter of Christ's kingdom is righteousness; therefore if we yield to His authority, righteousness will rule us, and sin will have no control over us.

There are many people who complain that they cannot keep from sinning,--sin has dominion over them, and they cannot help themselves. Indeed everybody has had that experience. All men know, and are forced to confess, that there is power that can control them.

But sin is from the devil, if righteousness is from God; and God is infinitely stronger than the devil. Therefore everybody who knows the power of sin ought to know that if he yields himself as freely to be the servant of righteousness as he has to serve sin, he will find the power for good immeasurably stronger than that for evil.

So even our experience in sin may be made to serve a purpose in making us understand the possibilities in the Christian life. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

That answers the question as to how we can live a right life. The Lord has taken the responsibility wholly on himself; He has become answerable for our conduct, provided only that we will recognize and acknowledge Him in everything.

Just think! if we constantly remember that our breath comes from God,--that He is breathing it into our nostrils,--and that we cannot move except by His power, there would be an end of sin. For no one can be thinking evil while meditating on the power and love of God. It is only the people who forget God, that will be lost.--Present Truth, November 28, 1901--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 125:3.

Chapter 184

Psalm 126: Something About Laughing

All laughter is not condemned, for there is a kind that is the direct result of the salvation of God.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen. The Lord has done great things for them." (Psalm 126:1:2)

God said to Abraham, "In Isaac shall your seed be called." (Genesis 21:12)

And Isaac means laughter, or laughing; so that they who are born of the Spirit may laugh. Yea, they must rejoice.

Unfortunately, such laughter is very rare. There is another kind of laughter, which is likened to "the crackling of thorns under a pot." (Ecclesiastes 7:6)

This is so common, so almost universal, that we were almost tempted to head this article, "Don't Laugh." That, however, would be too sweeping, for "there is a time to laugh," (Ecclesiastes 3:4) and to laugh heartily, but that time is not all the time or on every occasion.

We have often been pained at religious meetings to see the readiness with which the congregation would burst out into a hoarse laugh. It is true that some speakers deliberately seek to make their hearers laugh; in order to keep up their interest in what would otherwise be a dull discourse; but too often the fault is wholly on the part of the congregation, who seem to be looking for a chance to laugh.

There lies before me a report of a recent gathering on an important occasion, when several ministers addressed the assembly. One of them, in speaking about "Consecrated Intellect," said that there was nothing he

dreaded so much as the witty and ingenious preacher who bristled with nice little stories, made his audience laugh once or twice in every sermon, and sent them away with the delightful feeling that they had been to an entertainment instead of listening to the solemn voice of God.

That was well said, yet within two minutes he was interrupted by a "loud laughter." On the single page of the report, we find in addition to "applause," and "loud applause," no less than sixteen instances of "laughter" and "loud laughter." Of course one who was not present cannot tell how the remarks sounded, but very few of the statements that are punctuated with "(laughter)" seemed very funny in print.

We call attention to this, not specially for the sake of the comparatively few public speakers, but for the benefit of the thousands who listen--and laugh. Any earnest speaker would rather be encouraged by bright, eager, earnest attention, and a half unconscious smile that indicates the reception of a new idea, than by laughter.

Or, if the preacher desires to create laughter, he may be corrected by the people. "The witty and ingenious preacher" who bristles with nice little stories to make the congregation laugh, would soon find his occupation gone if his out-of-place witticisms were received in silence.

Too much laughter indicates absence of thought, and the increasing readiness to laugh on the slightest provocation, or on no provocation at all, shows that people are using their thinking power less and less, and are anxious to be simply tickled.

This they cannot afford; so we write in hope that some may be led to think more, and to laugh only when, with all the faculties that God has given them in full activity, they cannot help laughing.--Present Truth, April 7, 1897--Psalm 126:1-2.

Chapter 185

Psalm 130: Our Divine Helper

"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." (Psalm 130:1)

And he did not cry in vain. The depths from which he cried were the depths of sin; for he said: "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. ... Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Psalm 130:3-4,7-8)

So out of the depths of iniquity we may cry to be Lord, with the assurance that he will gladly help us. We cannot be too low down for Him to reach us.

The Pagan maxim, which too many quote as though it were Bible, is: "God helps him who helps himself."

But the truth revealed in the Bible is that God helps the man who is not able to help himself.

Read the account of a storm on the sea, and of deliverance from it, as recorded in Psalm 107:23-30. Of the men in the storm is said: "Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses." (Psalm 107:26-28)

So it was when Jehoshaphat, in behalf of the people, said to the Lord, "For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon You." (2 Chronicles 20:12) that the Lord sent deliverance. All these things "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4) "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of

grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Infirm means without strength; without strength implies having been overcome by sin. So we learn that, in the midst of defeat, when borne down under sin, we may come with boldness to Jesus, and find forgiveness and help; for it is only at the very lowest possible state that we become connected with Christ.

He came not to call the righteous, but sinners and repentance. (Matthew 9:13) As He came to save the lost, we commend ourselves to His mercy by acknowledging that we are lost sinners. But sin is death. Therefore, Christ bore our sins, and died for us. "Christ has redeemed this from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. ... That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Galatians 3:13-14)

So it is in our wretched, sin-cursed condition that we receive help from the Lord. Death is the lowest condition possible; and it is in His death that we become perfectly united to Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

We put on Christ by baptism. And what is baptism? "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4)

What does this show? Simply this, that not only may we be saved when in the very lowest state, but we cannot be saved in any other condition. As a matter of fact, all men are in that lost condition, "For all have sinned. ... They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one." (Romans 3:23,12)

But in order for any to get the benefits of salvation, they must acknowledge themselves to be in that condition. By the law of faith, boasting

is excluded, and this not only once, but always. The Christian can never boast of his goodness, for boasting shows the absence of faith, and, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23)

The Christian must always acknowledge himself to be a sinner, and then he may always be a sharer in the sacrifice of Christ. So he always lives only in the present. With Paul he may well say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15) "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I into the world." (Galatians 6:14)--Present Truth, May 4, 1893--Psalm 130:1-8.

Chapter 186

Psalm 130: Out of the Depths

"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." (Psalm 130:1)

Surely it is from the depths that one needs to cry unto the Lord, if from any place. The time to call for help is when one is in the greatest need; yet that is just the time that many feel that it is of no use to call. "I have sinned too greatly, and that too in the face of light, for the Lord to pay any attention to me."

This is too often the discouraged wail of the sinner. That is a great mistake. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17)

How much more must this be true of the Father of all. A striking instance in point is the case of Jonah. He was going directly contrary to the commandment of the Lord, running away from Him, trying to get entirely out of His sight, when the Lord arrested him and threw him into the sea, where he was swallowed by a fish. Now indeed he was in the depths. "Then Jonah cried unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said: I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and You heard my voice. For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; andthe floods compassed me about; all your billows and your waves passed over me. ... The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." (Jonah 2:1-3,5-6)

It would scarcely be possible for one to be in a worse situation than this. It was most literally from the depths that Jonah cried unto the Lord, and he was heard. And he was in the depths entirely through his own fault, too.

Now to see that Jonah was not an exceptional case, but that God just as readily hears all who are in the depths because of their folly, let us read the

following words to His praise: "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High; Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder." (Psalm 107:9-14)

That is just like the Lord, for: "The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. ... The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all that be bowed down." (Psalm 145:9,14)

But we haven't yet done with Jonah in the depths. Here comes one who always sees the difficulties of the situation, and asks, "How could a man live and preserve his consciousness, and be able to pray in the belly of a fish? If that thing really happened, it must have been an exceptional case, and the Lord must have wrought a miracle to keep him alive."

Most certainly the Lord wrought a miracle in this case, which was just as real as yours is, and it was not an exceptional one by any means. It was written for our sakes, in order that we might have comfort and hope in similar circumstances. It shows us that God does not forsake us even in the depths, and when we are there as the direct result of sinning against Him. He even works a miracle to keep us alive in the depths, that we may call on Him. What a blessing that story is to the one who believes it.

It shows us that no man can get away from the presence of the Lord. Thank God for that. We have all tried it, haven't you? And are you not glad that you did not succeed? Perhaps you think that you have succeeded all too well, and are now sorrowing over it, imagining that you are lost. Don't believe in it for a moment. Listen to one who knows: "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:7-10)

No; we cannot get away from the presence of the Lord, even by plunging into the depths. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

Christ has ascended into the heavens, "now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9:24)

But: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Ephesians 4:9)

You get down into the very lowest place, and there you find Christ Jesus the Lord, waiting to lift you up and save you, "For Him no depths can drown. For the Lord will not cast off ever." (Lamentations 3:31)

"But He cast Jonah into the sea, into the depths." Indeed, He did, but it was in order that Jonah might find Him; for bear in mind that God was there first. It was He that delivered up His only begotten Son, casting Him into the depths, yet not casting Him. He sent Him there, in order that he might be recovered. Then we can with good confidence cry unto Him out of the depths. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also." (Psalm 95:4)

Every atom of matter even in the lowest parts of the earth is charged with force, which is nothing else than the power of the living Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God," (Hebrews 9:14) for our offenses. Go then even into the lowest depths, in your mad attempt to flee from the presence of the Lord, and there you will find the cross of Him who is "mighty to save." (Isaiah 63:1)

And He is not there as a detective, on the hunt for evil, and magnifying the smallest thing into the greatest, in order that He may make out a case. "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is

forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." (Psalm 130:3-4) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Therefore, "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption." (Psalm 130:7)

Remember it is hope, not presumption. We must not presume on His mercy, to allow us to continue in sin with impunity; but we must hope in it, that it will deliver us from all our iniquities.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you." (Psalm 50:15)

"But I don't know how to pray; I can't express myself." Of course not. The Lord knows that. It is He who has told us that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." (Romans 8:26)

Our wants are too great for us to be able to express them, and His gifts too great for us to be able to comprehend them.

"What then shall we do?" Well, what ought one to do in a case where he does not know anything?

"Evidently the best thing for him to do is to keep still, and listen to someone who does know." Exactly that. Therefore the best thing for men to do in the matter of praying is to keep still.

"What! do you mean to say that a man should never open his mouth in prayer, and that his voice should never be heard?" Not by any means. The Lord says, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." (Hosea 14:2)

By all means use words, nevertheless keep still. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20)

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

"Be still." What for? To know that the Lord is God. But if we come to the knowledge that He is God, what will we know about Him? Just this, that He fills heaven and earth; that there is no place where His spirit is not.

The trouble with us is that we do not keep still long enough to find this out. When we do, then we shall continue to keep still before Him, realizing that since He is everything, we are nothing. "God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

Yes; let your words be few; the fewer the better. Use His words.

He says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10)

Keep silence before Him, until you realize that He is "above all, and through all, and in all." (Ephesians 4:6)

Let Him fill you with a sense of His greatness, and thereby with a sense of your own needs. Then allow the Spirit to help your infirmity, making intercession for you. When He thus fills you, your utterance will be but the breathing of the Spirit in you.

Why should not your prayers, and everybody's prayers, be inspired of the Holy Spirit, just as much as were the prayers of David? Indeed they ought to be, for we are told, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter 4:11) "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Colossians 3:16)

Then you will always have all confidence in calling upon Him, because: "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)--Present Truth, March 31, 1897--Psalm 130:1.

Chapter 187

Psalm 132: A Temple for the Lord

Thus the Psalmist David wrote: "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions; How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob: Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, Until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Psalm 132:1-5)

Yet David never built the house for the Lord. "[He] found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house." (Acts 7:46-47)

Moreover, David surely knew that it would be impossible for him to build the temple that he desired to build for the Lord, or any kind of habitation, before he should go into his own house or close his eyes to sleep. Yet he deliberately made the vow that we have just read. And why? Because he knew that: "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands." (Acts 7:46)

Solomon, who built the temple, understood that well, as we learn in his prayer at its dedication. (See 2 Kings 8:27) Heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool. David knew that the only real dwellingplace he could find for the mighty God of Jacob was a humble and a contrite heart. "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15) "Know you not that you are the temple of God?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, "In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord; In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21-22)

This is the habitation that every soul may find for the Lord, in which He will dwell in all His fullness. (Ephesians 3:19) And there need be no delay, because He is waiting to enter. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) "Today, if you will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts." (Psalm 95:7-8)

It is every reader's blessed privilege to find such a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob before he sleeps. Shall it not be done?--Present Truth, February 27, 1896--Original title: Front Page--Psalm 132:1-5.

Chapter 188

Psalm 135: God's Memorial

"Your name, O Lord, endures forever; and your memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations." (Psalm 135:13)

That God's name endures forever, needs no argument for anyone who believes that there is a God. His name is Jehovah, the One who is and the One who will be. When Moses wished a name to take with him as evidence that he had been authorized to bring Israel out of Egypt, the Lord said to him, "I AM that I AM: and He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you." (Exodus 3:14)

And then, after showing that as I AM He was the same God that the fathers had known Him to be, He added, "This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." (Exodus 3:15)

God IS. That is His name. The words I AM that I AM, which God gives as His name, are exactly the same as Jehovah. He is, and therefore He has been and will be. All time, past, present, and future, is present to Him. Eternity is always now. Because God is, therefore everything else is.

God's name is in Christ, for the only begotten Son had it by inheritance; and: "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17,RV)

His name itself implies that He is Creator. The memorial of God must necessarily be something that tends to keep His name and character in mind. "The Lord is good: sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant. ... For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries." (Psalm 135:3,5-7)

Note that this language occurs only a little before the statement that the Lord's name endures for ever, and His memorial unto all generations. "Your name, O Lord, endures forever; and your memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations." (Psalm 135:13)

The fact that the Lord is Creator is that which distinguishes Him from all false, pretended gods. It is that which shows Him to be God. It is therefore really His name. "The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King. ... The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures." (Jeremiah 10:10-13)

Note the similarity of language to that of the psalm from which we have quoted. God is known by His works. "That which may be known of God is manifest [even unto the most benighted heathen]; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity; so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20)

His memorial therefore is in reality His works. He would have His people declare unto their children "His strength, and the wonderful works that He has done. ... That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should rise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." (Psalm 78:4,6-7)

It is necessary to keep the works of God in mind, for by them we gain the victory over sin. "You, Lord, have made me glad through your work: I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:4)

The reason why there is so much sin in the world is that men do not think upon the works of God's hands. If they would consider His great works, they would be filled with a sense of their own insignificance, and of their dependence upon His might, "When I consider your heavens, the work 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?" (Psalm 8:3-4) and would yield themselves to Him, for Him to guide and keep them in His ways.

Because men are so prone to forget the works of God, so apt to become absorbed in themselves so as not to see the things that are before their eyes, God has made a memorial for His wonderful works. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious; and His righteousness endures for ever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious and full of compassion." (Psalm 111:2-4)

This last verse, "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered," is literally, "He has made a memorial for His wonderful works."

One translation has it, "He has appointed a memorial for His wonderful works," and another, "He has provided that His wonderful work should be remembered."

He has not only set His works before the eyes of all people, even performing them before their eyes, but in order that there might not be a shadow of an excuse for forgetting Him, He has above all made a memorial for His works,--something that if kept, cannot fail to fix the attention of men to what He has done for them in His mercy and compassion. What is this memorial? Here are His own words: "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." (Ezekiel 20:12) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For

in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20:8-11)

This is the Lord's memorial, which shall endure. If the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day of the week, the only day that God has ever given to commemorate His wonderful works, had always been kept, there would never have been a heathen on the face of the earth. "Be still, and know that I am God," (Psalm 46:10) says the Lord. In the rush of business, men forget everything but themselves. They act as though there were no God, and their existence depended wholly on themselves.

This would not be the case if they had regular periods for meditating on the works of the Lord, remembering that He alone is great, and that everything exists in Him. This would keep them humble, and through the week they would labor with reference to Him, and not as though the world belonged to them, and depended upon them. In all their ways they would acknowledge Him, and He would direct their paths. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:6)

The Sabbath stillness is the time for men to acquire that knowledge of God which will keep them sensible of their dependence on Him through all the other days. His memorial endures through all generations. Let us ever keep it, as a precious reminder of Him who has put His own life into His works for our sakes, so that we may also endure throughout eternity.--Present Truth, October 19, 1899--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Psalm 135:3-7,13.

Chapter 189

Psalm 136: A God of Love

The difference between the ideas of God expressed in the Bible and those of many theologians is very wide indeed.

It is very strange indeed that anyone who had ever read the Bible--and believed it in the least--could have a conception of God as distant and far withdrawn from His creatures, when He tells us explicitly that He is "not far from every one of us," (Acts 17:27) that He is always within hearing distance, yes, even always within reach.

How many there have been,--and indeed how many there are, who think of God as a stern and unrelenting Judge, as much a god of bloodshed and war as Mars, or the idol Juggernaut! Very different was the conception of King David when he wrote the one 136th Psalm, beginning, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

Throughout the whole 26 verses that is the refrain of each: "for His mercy endures for ever."--Present Truth, April 29, 1897--Psalm 136:1.

Chapter 190

Psalm 136: God's Mercy

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

The mercy of God endures for ever, because it is an attribute of His being. As He is infinite in power and knowledge, majesty and justice, so also is He infinite in mercy. And having mercy as one of His attributes, He might show mercy; for otherwise He would deny himself. He cannot deny His own character; He cannot go contrary to His nature.

It was necessary, therefore, that when Adam sinned he should be dealt with in mercy. It was necessary that the plan of salvation should be provided, whereby sin could be pardoned, and then escape the consequences of transgression.

Had God at once smitten the offender and blotted him out of existence, the universe might have stood in awe and acknowledged the justice of the transaction, but they would not have seen Him as a God of mercy to the offender. They would not have known Him by His true name: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." (Exodus 34:6-7)

Every act of God is an act of mercy; for He can not go contrary to one of His own attributes. He can never act in a way which is not consistent with His possessing infinite mercy. Every attribute of God is exercised in all that He does. We never read of an act of infinite power, which was not also one of infinite wisdom, or vice versa. We never see Him manifesting infinite goodness, without also showing His infinite wisdom and power. The exercise of one attribute in an infinite degree, demands the exercise of all.

In being infinitely just to man, God must also be infinitely merciful, and in being infinitely merciful, He must also be infinitely just. And this is what we see in the wonderful plan of salvation. The death of Christ, which was the great central act of this plan, speaks in awful eloquence of both God's justice and His mercy:

• His mercy in that He gave His Son to die rather than that man should be lost; and

• His justice, in that He would not pass over sin, even though it would cost Him the life of His only begotten Son.

The 136th Psalm, from which we have quoted, presents this idea clearly before us. It speaks of numerous acts of God, judgments as well as favors, and links each one with the thought of His goodness and mercy. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods; for His mercy endures for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him who alone does great wonders; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens for His mercy endures for ever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters; for His mercy endures for ever. ... To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn; for His mercy endures for ever. ... To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts; for His mercy endures for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; for His mercy endures for ever. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1-6,10,13-15)

The whole psalm is a declaration that infinite justice and infinite mercy are consistent one with the other, and in the working of God are linked together.

Infinite mercy to God's creatures demands the punishment of sin. It demands that sin be dealt with in infinite severity. Who would want a God who would not be severe with sin? How could pure and sinless beings be happy if sin were to be lightly regarded? Something so utterly contrary in its very essence to the nature of God and to that of all sinless beings, could not

be suffered to exist without marring the peace of the universe, and bringing discord into the happiness and harmony which should be uninterrupted for ever.

Justice to the sinner, is also justice to the saint. The smiting of the firstborn of Egypt, the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, and the various other judgments mentioned in this psalm, are acts of mercy to the people of God, and to all who would thereby have opportunity to be admonished, and turn from their evil ways unto the Lord.

The destruction of sinners is even a mercy to themselves, since it saves them from a further unhappiness. For a sinner cannot endure the presence of God, and would be nowhere more miserable than in heaven itself. And since life to him would mean nothing but misery (for sin and misery are inseparable) it is only a mercy to him that it should terminate. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17)

It not only lasts to all eternity, but has existed from all eternity.

This is why His covenant with the righteous is called the "everlasting covenant." (Hebrews 13:20)

From everlasting there existed in the mind of God the covenant of grace, whereby the one that should sin could be pardoned and restored to his position of favor.

And when Adam fell, God simply brought forth this covenant and manifested to the universe that He possessed the attribute of mercy toward the offender. He proclaimed himself not alone the God of justice, but the God of mercy.

And by all His acts since then toward fallen man, He has proclaimed himself in the same way, and will do so by all His dealings with both saints and sinners to the end of time. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; because His mercy endures for ever. Let Israel now say, that His mercy

endures for ever. ... Let them now that fear the Lord say, that His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 118:1-2,4)--Present Truth, October 5, 1893--Psalm 136:1-15.

Chapter 191

Psalm 136: Enduring Mercy

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)

This is the first verse of the 136th Psalm, and every one of the 26 verses of the psalm is in the same manner as this one: "His mercy endures for ever."

To some this psalm seems monotonous; but it ought not to be so. It is surely a blessed thing to know that the mercy of the Lord is everlasting, and we should never be weary of hearing of it.

In this psalm we read of judgment visited upon certain people. It tells of the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt, the overthrow of Pharaoh and of his host in the Red Sea, and the smiting of famous kings. Now most people have the idea that God's mercy ceases, or at least is held in abeyance, when He executes punishment upon the ungodly. This, however, shows us that such an idea is a mistaken one.

Nowhere does the Bible give the slightest warrant for the idea that at any time there will ever be any less mercy with the Lord than there is now. The common statement that by and by mercy will step down, and justice will take place, is most dishonoring to God. It implies a change in His character and in His dealing with His creatures. It not only teaches that sometime He will be less merciful than He is now, but it also teaches that now He is not as just as He will be at some future time.

In this psalm we are called upon to give thanks. "To Him that smote Egypt in their first born; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:10)

The fact that He smote the first born in Egypt is given as a proof that God's mercy endures for ever. "[He] overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea," (Psalm 136:15) not because His mercy failed, but for the reason that His mercy endures for ever.

The mercy of God for the Egyptians was just as great as for the Israelites. They were most cruelly treating the people to whom they owed their lives, and whom God, in fulfillment of His promise, was about to bring into their own land.

But He did not precipitately destroy their oppressors. He sent His servants to Pharaoh, making known the truth which would save him and his people as well as the Israelites. The promised to Abraham, which God was about to fulfill, included the justification of the heathen through faith, saying, "In you shall all nations be blessed." (Galatians 3:8)

This blessing was offered to Pharaoh and his people, and was rejected with scorn and contempt.

"I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2)

This was the reply of the haughty king. Therefore God, in fulfilling the mercy promised to the fathers, was obliged to destroy the Egyptians. He shook them off, as they were endeavoring to stop Him in His work. His mercy did not change in the least, but the Egyptians refused to have it, and when people refuse to accept mercy, there is nothing left them but destruction. "[He] has redeemed us from all our enemies; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:24)

This is identical with the inspired song of Zacharias, after the birth of John: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of Hisservant David; As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; The oath which He swore to our father Abraham, That He would grant unto us, 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." (Luke 1:68-75)

This does not indicate mercy for a special class. "All that hate us," are they who resist the progress of God's merciful reign over the earth. They despise both justice and mercy. We are delivered from our enemies, only in order that we may serve the Lord in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life. If we were not desirous of thus serving the Lord, we certainly should not be delivered. God's everlasting mercy exists for all, and none fail of receiving its fullness except those who will not have it.

Do not be carried away with the idea that in the preaching of the Gospel mercy is revealed, and justice in the destruction of the wicked. God's attributes are not thus divided. In the Gospel the righteousness, or justice, of God is revealed. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)

The righteousness of God is revealed in Christ for the remission of sins of all who have faith in His blood, "That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

If God were not strictly just, He could never justify the ungodly. There is kindness and everlasting mercy in the justice of the Lord. The repetition of the sentence, "for His mercy endures for ever," shows that there is need of the dwelling much on the mercy of the Lord. "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto You, O Lord, will l sing." (Psalm 101:1) "The earth, O Lord, is full of your mercy; teach me your statutes." (Psalm 119:64)

In the commandments of the Lord,--the ten commandments,--which are commonly supposed to be the embodiment of stern justice, we learn that the mercy of the Lord endures to thousands of generations. He takes vengeance on them that reject all goodness, but His anger soon ceases in their destruction, while His mercy endures.

The mercy of the Lord not only fills the earth, but it is also unto the clouds: "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and your faithfulness

reaches unto the clouds." (Psalm 36:5) "For your mercy is great unto the heavens, and your truth unto the clouds." (Psalm 57:10)

The sun, moon, and stars reveal it to us. The exhortation is, "O give thanks unto the Lord of lords; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him who alone does great wonders; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters; for His mercy endures for ever. To Him that made great lights; for His mercy endures for ever. The sun to rule by day; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:3-8)

Therefore, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking." (Isaiah 40:26)

Keep looking up, and meditating on the greatness of the Lord, and you will never more say or think, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed awayfrom my God." (Isaiah 40:27)

He is always looking in every part of the earth for an opportunity to exert all His mighty power in behalf of the weak and the oppressed. "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:29) "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." (Psalm 140:12)

Therefore, "Give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1)--Present Truth, October 26, 1899--Psalm 136:1,3-8,10,15,24.

Chapter 192

Psalm 139: Formed for a Purpose

Sometimes a person thinks: "I am but an insignificant atom in the great universe; I cannot accomplish anything, and my loss would not be felt."

And feeling thus, he loses energy, and almost or entirely gives up the struggle.

There are several things to be thought of at such a time. One is that the universe is composed of atoms, each one in itself is as insignificant as any other. That which may be said of one may be said of all; if one can be dispensed with and no loss be felt, so might another one, and all the rest one by one.

That is, the universe might be destroyed without any notice being taken of it! You say that this cannot be; and neither can a single atom be lost without being missed. But here are some Scriptures to think of in this connection: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" (Isaiah 40:12)

The answer is, God has; He has measured the dust of the earth, and weighed out the proper proportions for the mountains and hills to a single grain; there is not one too many or too few. He continues: "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking." (Isaiah 40:26)

And then He very purposely asks: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed away from my God?" (Isaiah 40:27)

In place of Jacob and Israel, each individual may insert his own name, and it will read just the same.

Neither the earth nor the inhabitants came into existence by chance. God created them according to His eternal purpose. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18)

Nothing that occupied His thought in creation is too small for Him to notice afterward. He tells us that not a single sparrow is forgotten; God has them in His mind all the time. And as for us, each one of us may say to Him in truth: "You have formed my reins; You have knit me together in my mother's womb. ... My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth. Your eyes did see my unperfect substance, and in your book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:13,15-16)

Surely God cares for that which He has taken such pains to make. God created everything for a purpose, and to every person He has given a work to do. It is not for us to say whether that work is of great or little importance. How can we know, when we have not seen the plan?

We know that God sees not as man sees, and His thoughts are not our thoughts; therefore we cannot estimate the value of things according to God's standard. All we can know is that everything and everybody is of importance,--how much or how little is none of our business.

Our part is to give diligence not to get out of the place where God puts us, so that we may always be ready to His hand, and to know that there is not a creature so insignificant but that it can be said: "The Lord has need of him." (Mark 11:3)--Present Truth, June 19, 1902--Psalm 139:13-16.

Chapter 193

Psalm 139: Destroyed from the Lord's Presence

The Psalmist, addressing the Lord, inquires: "Where shall I go from your Spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there." (Psalm 139:7-8)

But of the wicked we read that they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

The presence of the Lord, when He manifests the glory of His power, causes the destruction of the wicked; and as His presence is everywhere, and will be manifested in the glory of His power against the wicked in the day of vengeance, the fate of the wicked can be nothing else but utter destruction. "Our God is a consuming fire," (Hebrews 12:26) and when that fire comes down from God out of heaven upon all the wicked, in the last great Judgment, it devours them as the flame licks up chaff, and makes an eternal end of them and of sin. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Revelation 20:9)--Present Truth, July 18, 1895--Psalm 139:7-8.

Chapter 194

Psalm 139: Wonderfully Fashioned

It was no fable of Evolution that caused the Psalmist to exclaim by inspiration: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ... Your eyes did see my imperfect substance, and in your book were all my members written." (Psalm 139:14,16)

When he contemplated the infinite power and wisdom by which the Lord entered into the minutest detail of the life of His creatures, he said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me." (Psalm 139:6)

The following words from a foreign journal suggest some interesting thoughts:

We are accustomed to regard the statement that "the hairs of our heads are numbered," as a highly figurative way of making us believe that nothing is too small for the attention of the Divine Artificer, and the more one studies, and the further one looks into the marvelous structure of the body, the more does he perceive that this minute uniformity is a literal reality.

Exactly such or such anatomical elements go to the production of a single hair, and one arrangement of these elements makes the hairs that pass out through the cutical of the scalp, keep up an uninterrupted growth, so that a man in full vigor must visit his barber at stated intervals, or be very uncomfortable; while the hairs that pass through the apertures of the skin of the arm remain of about the same length constantly.

No human ingenuity can change this order of nature; but one of the most interesting order of applications of this persistent uniformity is found in the recording of thumb-and-finger prints, for the identification of recruits, prisoners and other large classes of men. The ends of the nerves of touch, technically called the papillae, are arranged in orderly rows on the bulbs of the thumbs and fingers, and each papilla is placed at a certain determinate

distance from its adjacent fellow, and can easily be "made out," with a good glass on many hands.

The result of the arrangement is, that a "pattern" is produced, for these nerve tips are not placed in any two of the millions of us exactly similarly, so that if a man blackens his finger with a suitable pigment, and presses it upon a properly prepared paper, he leaves an impression that is "his mark," and not another's. It is said that the Chinese practiced this method of detecting criminals a thousand years ago. Perhaps they did; and very likely they'll claim Edison next; but it has remained for a scientific Englishman to collect hundreds of these impressions--compel them to disclose their individuality by enlarged photographs, so that he has them classified and described and named and indexed--and prove the superiority of this means of identification to measurements of other methods now in vogue.

Sir Francis Galton has produced a novel, interesting, and entertaining book; of course, the subject is treated in a scientific spirit, and has added another interesting testimony to the truth, that not only the hairs of the head, but the tiny mounds made by the tips of the nerves are under the governance of the Divine law, unchanging, and the fiat of Him with whom "there is no variableness neither shadow of turning."--Present Truth, June 21, 1894--Psalm 139:6,14,16.

Chapter 195

Psalm 139: Light in Darkness

The Scriptures tell us that: "[God] covers himself with light, as with a garment," (Psalm 104:2) and, "[He] dwells in light that no man can approach unto." (1 Timothy 6:16)

Yet in Psalm 97 we read that: "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." (Psalm 97:2)

These apparently contradictory statements are brought together and harmonized in: "Even the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalm 139:12)

This does not mean merely that God can see in the dark; but darkness and light are to Him who made them the same thing. This He demonstrated at the creation, when: "[He] commanded the light to shine out of darkness." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

And again when He caused the dark cloud to give light to the children of Israel, "It was a cloud and darkness to them [the Egyptians], but it gave light by night to these [the Israelites]." (Exodus 14:20)

The truth that "The light shines in darkness," (John 1:5) and "out of darkness," (2 Corinthians 4:6) is shown in all nature. It is from the black thunder cloud that the vivid lightnings shoot forth. The black coal, which is storedup sunshine, yields the glaring gas and fire-light. Blackness is but absorption of light, even as whiteness is reflected light. The thick cloud is itself the evidence of sunshine, for it is the sun's rays that draw up the vapors which form the clouds that sometimes veil its glory before they can descend in blessings upon the thirsty land.

This is not merely a bit of scientific curiosity. The story of the clouds and darkness that gave light, and which we see repeated in some form every day,

was "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

The lesson that we are to remember is that: "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness cannot hinder it." (John 1:5)

It is to keep us from ever being depressed by clouds and darkness. It is to show us the reality of the promise that our darkness shall be as the noonday. "And if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday:" (Isaiah 58:10)

Though we walk in darkness and have no light, we shall stay on our God, who is light, and so even the valley of the shadow of death will have no terrors for us. "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." (Isaiah 50:10) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." (Psalm 23:4)

Even there our path will be as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18)--Present Truth, October 30, 1902--Psalm 139:12.

Chapter 196

Psalm 141: Visible Prayers

David prayed to the Lord: "Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the liftingup of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2)

This has reference to the morning and evening worship of the sanctuary when incense was offered while all the people were praying without: "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." (Exodus 30:7-8) "According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." (Luke 1:9-10)

In the book of Revelation we read that an angel came to the altar in heaven, "Having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God, out of the angel's hand." (Revelation 7:3-4)

Still more emphatic is the statement that: "The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (Revelation 5:8)

From these things we may know that prayers offered in faith, and there is no other real prayer, are not empty sounds before the Lord, but that they come before Him in visible form. They appeal not to His ears only, but to His eyes as well.

This is an additional proof that He gives to us that He will not forget to answer them. He has them continually before Him.--Present Truth, January 4, 1894--Psalm 141:2.

Chapter 197

Psalm 143: Songs of the Birds

"Cause me to hear your loving-kindness in the morning; for in You do I trust." (Psalm 143:8)

Is not that a mistake? Does it not say, "Cause me to see your loving-kindness"? No; it is quite correct. It says, "Cause me to hear your loving-kindness in the morning." (Psalm 143:8)

Did you not hear it this morning? If not, listen for it tomorrow morning. I heard it this morning. It began with break of day. There was a chirp, a twitter, and then a burst of melody. I looked in every direction out-of-doors, but could not see a single bird, although the whole air was full of their music.

It seemed as though from every bit of space a silver throat was pouring forth song. That was the loving-kindness, the goodness, of the Lord, of which the whole earth is full: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Psalm 33:5)

It is revealed to and by those who trust in the Lord; and the song of the birds is always the spontaneous outburst of trust in His keeping power. Listen to it, and then let the ever new song be in your heart, for: "He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Everybody is familiar with songs that tell about Christians afloat on a ship at sea, sailing toward the harbor of heaven; but few break the spell that a jangling melody casts over them, sufficiently to remember that such songs make havoc of God's word.

We have hope as an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, it is true; (Hebrews 6:19) but ships do not use their anchor when they are sailing, and we are to use ours all the time. The ship at anchor does not drift.

Moreover there is nothing more disastrous to a ship than a rock; but the solid Rock is the Christian's only safety. No; the Christian's relation to the troubled sea is not that of a ship tossed upon it, but of a light-house standing immovable amid the raging billows, because it is anchored to the Rock of Ages.

Did you ever notice that the birds utter their song of rejoicing and praise the first thing in the morning, because they set about gathering their morning meal? If you stop to think, you will remember that it is so.

There is a concert in which every one takes part for about an hour at daybreak, and after that you will hear scarcely a note for an hour or two. Every bird having offered its tribute of thanksgiving, is then engaged in gathering the food which God has spread for it, and for which it gave thanks beforehand.

They do not worry for fear they will not receive anything; they simply trust, and show forth the loving-kindness of God. "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:37) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

This "garment of praise" is what God gives us in the Sabbath, for the Psalm for the Sabbath-day we read: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto your name, O Most High; To show forth your loving-kindness in the morning, and your faithfulness every night; ... For You, Lord, have made me glad through your work; I will triumph in the works of your hands." (Psalm 92:1-2,4)

The Sabbath means absolute trust and rest in the Lord, and so, joy in Him.

Perfect submission, perfect delight.
--Fanny J. Crosby, Hymn: Blessed Assurance.

--Present Truth, May 22, 1902--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 143:8.

Chapter 198

Psalm 145: What to Talk About

"I will speak of the glorious honor of your majesty, and of your wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of your terrible acts; and I will declare your greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of your great goodness, and shall sing of your righteousness. ... All your works shall praise You, O Lord; and your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of the kingdom, and talk of your power; To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom." (Psalm 145:5-7,10-12)--Present Truth, February 23, 1893--Psalm 145:5-12.

Chapter 199

Psalm 146: Put Not Your Trust in Princes

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." (Psalm 146:3) "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." (Psalm 118:8-9) "Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust." (Psalm 40:4)

Who else is worthy of trust? Who else can be trusted? Whose knowledge, and strength, and existence, is unfailing and sure, but only the Lord's? What man is there who is unchangeably reliable in all his ways even yesterday and today?

But the Lord, He is immutable,--the same not only yesterday and today, but for ever. No hero worshiper and no subject, however legal, would think of putting their confidence in prince or king longer than for the transient period of life; yet the Lord may be trusted for ever.

That man who puts his trust in princes favors will surely one day come to feel that if he had but served his God, and put his trust in Him, He would not have deserted him in his need. Truly, "Blessed is that man that makes the Lord his trust." (Psalm 40:4)

He shall not want; goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life, and he will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:1,6)--Present Truth, September 10, 1896--Psalm 146:3.

Chapter 200

Psalm 146: The Secret of a Happy Home

A home is composed of individuals, and a happy home is composed of happy individuals. Whatever, therefore, will bring happiness into the heart of each one of its inmates will bring happiness into the home. The Lord reveals the secret to us in:

"Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5)

David declares that he found this to be true, for he says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices. ... You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:8-9,11)

He says also that:

"[God is his] exceeding joy." (Psalm 43:4)

Paul tells us: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17)

Again he says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Romans 15:13)

Peter adds his testimony in these words concerning Christ: "Whom having not seen, you love, in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

And Luke says that Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them, and the people with one accord gave heed to the words. "And there was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:8)

Jesus Christ, then, received into the heart by faith brings into that heart "happiness," "gladness," "great joy," "all joy and peace," and "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Is that in each heart not enough to make any home happy?

But why does God's presence in our hearts bring such joy? Because: "God is love." (1 John 4:16)

And the fruits of His Spirit are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Without the Spirit of God in our hearts it is utterly impossible for us to have a happy home, for the best fruits or works of our flesh are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." (Galatians 5:19-21)

With God all things are possible. The most unlikely, gloomy, wretched, sinful home, may be filled with love, joy, peace, light, and righteousness, by letting Jesus in. His light will drive out all darkness, His love will drive out all hate, His peace will drive out all clamor, His joy will drive out all sadness, and His righteousness all sin. In short, the fruits of His Spirit will take the place of all the works of the flesh.

The inmates of that home may thus become accustomed to the atmosphere of heaven, and be prepared to live at last in all the purity and glory of Eden restored.

Oh, shall we not let Him in?--Present Truth, February 1, 1894--Psalm 146:5.

Chapter 201

Psalm 147: Saving Power

In bible study observe how constantly the Word couples together statements of God's power with expressions of His tenderness toward us. Thus: "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names." (Psalm 147:3-4)

Again: "Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite. The Lord lifts up the meek." (Psalm 147:5-6)

He gives assurance of His great power in order that we may trust our little and heavy trials to Him.

Many have an idea that because God is so great He cannot pay attention to such trifling perplexities as come in ordinary life. But that is just the reason why He can and does care for the little things, even to the sparrow that falls, and to the very hairs of the head.

He tells us of His great might in order to assure us that He is able to save us.

How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He has said,
Who unto the Saviour for refuge have fled?
--George Keith (attributed to), Hymn: How Firm a Foundation, 1787.

--Present Truth, September 12, 1895--Psalm 147:3-6.

Chapter 202

Psalm 147: Some Things that God Does

"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." (Psalm 147:3) "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." (Psalm 107:9) "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; That He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." (Psalm 113:7-8) "The Lord looses the prisoners; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises them that are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous; The Lord preserves the stranger; He relieves the fatherless and widow." (Psalm 146:7-9) "The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that be bowed down." (Psalm 145:14) "[He] forgives all your iniquities [and] heals all your diseases." (Psalm 103:3) "[The Lord] comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Is there anything you desire, that is not mentioned here? If so, remember that: "God opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16)

Then why do you complain of need? "All things are yours; ... Whether ... the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Corinthians 3:21-23)

God has done all, and given all; our part is to receive as freely as He gives.--Present Truth, May 23, 1901--Psalm 147:3.

Chapter 203

Psalm 148: A Call to Praise

A Call to Praise

"Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all you stars of light. Praise Him, you heavens of heavens." (Psalm 148:3-4)

The Heavens Respond

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge." (Psalm 19:1-2)

What They Tell

They declare the brightness of God's glory-which is but the shining forth of His infinite goodness and truth. "And he said, I beseech You, show me your glory. And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Exodus 33:18-19) "God is light," (1 John 1:5) because "God is love." (1 John 4:8)

They show His power; for they are His own handiwork. They teach knowledge--the knowledge of God, the Creator.

Starry Preachers

But, "The goodness of God leads you to repentance." (Romans 2:4)

The power of God is revealed in saving men: "The Gospel...is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16)

And the knowledge of God is life eternal: "This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

So the Apostle Paul shows, by quoting from Psalm 19, that the heavens are preaching the Gospel to men day and night: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." (Romans 10:18)

In Every Tongue

They speak to the benighted savage in the heart of Africa as well as the highest intellect in civilization, in a tongue understood by each--if the ear were but open to hear. "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." (Psalm 19:3-4)

What though no real voice nor sound,
Amid their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine--
The hand that made us is Divine.
--Joseph Addison, Hymn: The Spacious Firmament on High, 1712.

Lift Up Your Eyes

The Psalmist says that God has set His faithfulness in the heavens, and to every one who is tempted to think God has forgotten him amidst the multitude of people the Lord says: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails." (Isaiah 40:26)

His Care for One

It is because He is strong in power and infinite in goodness that He cares for the one weak soul, ready to perish. "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength." (Isaiah 40:29)

If ready to perish in weakness and discouraged, "lift up your eyes on high"--God tells you to--and see that the stars are shining still. The same Divine power and care that keeps them--every one--is for you.

Christ's Power to Save

The power displayed in the heavens is the power of God in Jesus Christ, "by whom also He made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:2)

Christ now "upholds all things by the word of His power," (Hebrews 1:3) men and women as well as stars.

To Show His Praises

We are called also to join with the stars in declaring God's praises: "That you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

They do it by reflecting the light of God's glory: "Let your light so shine." (Matthew 5:16)

The firmament witnesses to His wonderful handiwork: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Ephesians 2:10)

They manifest His glory: "The Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you." (Isaiah 60:2)

Let it be so.

Greater Glory

The telescope and photography have exhibited details not visible to the naked eye, multiplying the numbers of the starry worlds, and revealing distinctive beauties and marvels of design. But who can conceive of the glories of the universe of God which shall burst upon immortal eyes when earth's sin-tainted atmosphere is cleansed--when "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days." (Isaiah 30:26)

And outshining and dimming all, "The Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory." (Isaiah 60:19) "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matthew 13:43)--Present Truth, June 4, 1896--Psalm 148:3-4.

Chapter 204

Psalm 149: The Beauty of the Lord

Unto them that mourn the Lord promises beauty instead of the ashes of sorrow with which they have covered themselves. (Isaiah 61:3) What is this beauty? Here is the answer: "The Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the meek with salvation." (Psalm 149:4)

This beauty is "the beauty of holiness," (Psalm 29:2) the beauty of the life of the Lord, the beauty of right actions, of work wrought in God. Then, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish the work of our hands upon us." (Psalm 90:17)

What a change! from the ashes of despair to the beauty of the Lord. Are you feeling heavy and despondent? then this means you.

It is interesting and instructive to note that in the text, "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," (Isaiah 61:3) the word for "heaviness" is the same as that rendered "smoking" or "dimly burning," in Isaiah 42:3. The verb from which it is derived is the one generally used to denote failing sight, dimness of vision, or faintness.

So for every one whose spiritual sight has become dim, whose faith is almost gone, and who is fainting by the way, the Lord has a message that will make him sing for joy.

There is hope for all; no one need be discouraged, for Christ himself is here by the Holy Spirit "to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61:2)--Present Truth, May 24, 1900--Original title: Back Page--Psalm 149:4.

Chapter 205

Psalm 150: Made From Nothing

"Praise you the Lord." (Psalm 150:1)

Who? You--whether you have ever done so before or not. Why?

"Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness." (Psalm 150:2)

His mighty acts are seen in the things which He has made. One may have little of the world's possessions, but all share in the light, the air, the life, and those things of creation which no man's selfishness can monopolize.

Made From Nothing

In the beginning God created the world from nothing, "So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3) "He spoke and it was, He commanded and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9)

We may praise Him for the might which could make something where nothing was before.

Made From Less Than Nothing

The same power that created now saves. If we could make any comparison between the various ways in which Infinite power is exercised, we might say that the mightiest of the acts for which all may praise Him is the great act of salvation.

He made the earth from nothing. It was a harder case in making the Christian, for fallen man was "less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

Praise God for His excellent might, which can create the "new creature" where was worse than nothing. "Less than nothing, and vanity." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Praise God for His excellent might, which can create the "new creature" where was worse than nothing. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)--Present Truth, August 27, 1896--Psalm 150:1.

Chapter 206

Psalm 150: Using the Breath

The Psalmist closes the book of Psalms with the words: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)

This is the right use of breath.

Cause for Praise

Sometimes we find discouraged souls who think they have nothing to praise the Lord for. But they can praise Him for breath; they have that. And when men use the breath God gives them to thank Him for it they will find sufficient causes for praising the Lord. The breath is the breath of life, the breath of the Lord given to all men, just as truly as when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life in the beginning.

Anxiety

Anxious thought about the future wears out more people physically and spiritually than present distresses. Another name for this anxiety is unbelief, and a cure for it is to read Christ's words here given, and believe them: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:27-34)

Faith knows that God who has all power will do all the caring for the one who seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Thank Him

Whether we thank the Lord for bearing our sin or not, He bears it; for: "Upon Him is laid the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

If we do not thank Him for it, it makes no difference to Him; He bears it just the same, only by our ingratitude we cling to the burden of it also.

But to thank Him is to confess the sin, and to confess it is to give Him the joy of forgiving the sin, and to give ourselves the peace and joy of forgiveness.--Present Truth, August 15, 1895--Psalm 150:6.

Chapter 207

Psalm 150: Giving Praise

The Divine injunction is: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)

This is without qualification. Rich and poor, high and low, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and bad,--all are called upon to praise the Lord.

There is no reason in the world why all men should not praise Him. "He is good; [and] His mercy endures for ever." (Psalm 136:1) "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Psalm 33:5) "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke 6:35) "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

But some will say: "I don't see how it is possible for the wicked to praise the Lord; for when I am conscious of having sinned, my mouth is closed, and I cannot praise Him."

There are very many professed Christians whose experience is the same. They praise the Lord when they feel in good case, and not otherwise. That which such ones call praising the Lord is really praise of themselves. The Pharisee doubtless thought he was praising the Lord when he said, "God, I thank you that I am not as other men." (Luke 18:11)

He had no consciousness of sin, he felt good, and so he praised--himself. The fact that so many persons do not think that they can praise the Lord except when they feel in the best condition, is evidence that their praise is not for what the Lord is but for what they are, or what they think they are.

True praise to God is that which arises solely from a sense of His goodness. The highest angel in heaven would find nothing for which to praise the Lord, if he looked to himself. We can praise only the object that we are looking at and thinking about.

Praise to God is for what He is, and not for what we are. Now God is always the same, no matter what our condition. Therefore He is always worthy of praise. Out of the depths we may praise the Lord, and thereby be lifted up into the presence of His glory; for He says, "Whoso offers praise, glorifies me." (Psalm 50:23)

If the wicked would begin to praise the Lord, they would cease to be wicked. In our greatest sinfulness we may praise the Lord for His love and mercy to sinners. The goodness of God leads to repentance, and the continual recognition of that goodness keeps the soul in dependence upon it. So let all say in sincerity: "I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless your name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise your name for ever and ever." (Psalm 145:1-2)--Present Truth, April 30, 1896--Psalm 150:6.

Chapter 208

Psalm 150: Praise the Lord

Praise to the holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise:
In all His works most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.
--John Henry Newman, Hymn: Praise to the Holiest, 1865.

"Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6)

That is what breath is for,--to praise the Lord with. It is the breath that God gives that makes man a living soul; and man was formed only for the glory of God.

But we see that the call to praise God is not limited to man. It includes everything that has breath, and the lower animals have breath as well as man. They, too, are to praise the Lord.

Can dumb brutes praise the Lord? Most assuredly, else they would not be called on to do so. There is no exception; everything that has breath ought to praise the Lord. If there is anything that does not praise Him, there is no use for its existence. The lower animals cannot speak; how then can they praise God? In the same way that the heavens do, which also have no voice, namely, by fulfilling the object of their creation.

Breath gives life, and since it comes from God, it is to be used only in His service. So it is not merely with our tongues that we are to praise the Lord, but with every organ of the body that is quickened by the breath of life.

There is stronger evidence of the worthiness of God to be praised, than the charges that men bring against Him, and the blasphemies that are uttered. Remember that no man provides his own breath. The breath that we breathe is a gift from God, which He bestows upon us fresh every moment. What man is there who would patiently and uncomplainingly continue to heap

benefits upon those who persistently and unceasingly slandered and reviled him?

Such goodness is not found among men; but it is the goodness and forbearance of God. No stronger proof of His worthiness to be praised is needed than kindness in giving breath to those who hate and revile Him, and who use the breath that He gives them in denying His goodness.

Praise is an evidence of life. Hezekiah said, "The grave cannot praise You, death cannot celebrate You; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth. The living, the living, he shall praise You as I do this day." (Isaiah 38:18-19)

If a man does not praise the Lord, that is a sign that he is practically dead. It is just the same as though he had no breath at all, for he does not use it to any real purpose. What wonder if God at length leaves off giving breath to one who shows no appreciation of its value? Are you alive?--Present Truth, October 13, 1898--Psalm 150:6.

Chapter 209

Psalm 151: An Uninspired Psalm

It may be interesting to our readers to note the difference in tone between apocryphal and inspired Scriptures, and so we give them the following, which, with the introduction, we clipped from a recent number of the Independent. While it is true as to fact, the psalm has no likeness whatever to the genuine psalms of David. It simply lacks inspiration.

From a Syriac manuscript, formerly belonging to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, but now deposited in the University Library at Cambridge, Prof. W. Wright translates the following apocryphal psalm:

Psalm CLI. A Thanksgiving of David

"I was youngest among my brethren, and a youth in my father's house. I used to feed my father's flock, and I found a lion and a wolf, and I slew them and rent them. My hands made an organ, and my fingers fashioned a harp. Who will show me my Lord? He, my Lord, is become my God. He sent His angel and took me away from my father's flock, and anointed me with the oil of anointing. My brethren, the fair and the tall, in them the Lord had no pleasure. And I went forth to meet the Philistine, and he cursed me by his idols. But I drew his sword and cut off his head and took away the reproach from the children of Israel.(Psalm 151:1-8)

This sounds very much like the self-praise of the ancient Assyrian kings, but not at all like the songs in which the sweet psalmist of Israel praised God.--Signs of the Times, June 1, 1888

Appendix

The Throne and the King

The Coronation Chair shown on this page, as it stands in its place against the wall in Westminster Abbey, though not known as the king's throne, does in reality stand for the throne of Great Britain, hence upon it all monarchs have been crowned since Edward I.

Of it we need not speak further here, its history is very well known, and is easily accessible to all; what we are especially concerned with is the greater, more real, and everlasting throne on which the Lord elevates all who follow Him, no matter how lowly their origin: "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." (1 Samuel 2:8)

It has repeatedly been shown in these columns that God made man to be king. He crowned him with glory and honor, and put him over the works of His hand, putting everything under his feet, in subjection to him. Men have lost their kingship, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

But God's only begotten Son has come into man's place that He might bring many sons back to glory; and it is evident that in bring them to glory He restores the lost dominion, and places them upon the throne. The promise of Jesus is, "To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in His throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Now let us read how "the Man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5) "the firstborn among many brethren, was elevated to His position" (Romans 8:29) "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:3) "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." (1 Peter 3:22)

We read the Scripture in full. It begins with the Apostle Paul's prayer for us: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, maygive unto

you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:17-23)

It was by the resurrection from the dead that Jesus was raised to the throne of God; but the resurrection is included in the death of the cross; for Paul, who preached Jesus and the resurrection, rigidly confined himself to "Christ and Him crucified"; (1 Corinthians 2:2) and Jesus laid down His life only to take it again. "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John 10:17)

Therefore we are justified in saying that it was the cross that elevated Jesus to His high position. This is corroborated by the words which Jesus used in describing the manner of death that He should die: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)

Not merely did the cross elevate Jesus to the throne of God, but the cross was itself the throne. There were no accidents in Christ's life. All that "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel" did to Him was no more than what God's hand in and counsel had "determined before to be done." (Acts 4:27-28)

And therefore the placing of a crown upon His head, and an inscription above it, calling Him king, exactly indicated the rank which He held on the cross. It was a cruel mockery that the crown was placed on the head of Jesus was made of thorns, but it indicated a truth which those who did it did not understand,--that the cross is the throne of God, and the thorny way is the way of glory.

If we recall the figures and descriptions of God's throne, we shall see the cross of Jesus fills all the conditions. Let us take a hasty glance at some of them. The thing for which the ancient tabernacle, and afterward the temple, were especially built, was the ark in which were the tables of the law. This ark symbolized God's throne, for God said to Moses: "There will I meet with you, and there I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 25:22)

God dwells between the cherubim. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You that lead Joseph like a flock; You that dwell between the cherubims, shine forth." (Psalm 80:1)

Again, Mount Sinai, the place of the law, was God's sanctuary when He came down upon it with all His angels. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." (Psalm 68:17)

From that mountain flowed forth, even while it was the embodiment of God's law, a stream of living water for the people. Even so it is with God's throne in heaven, (Revelation 20:1) which is a living throne. (Ezekiel chapter 1) This stream came from Christ, the Rock, the living Stone, (1 Corinthians 10:4) from whom the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal" springs; for the Lamb slain is in the midst of the throne. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Revelation 5:6)

We see that God's throne contains the living law on living stones, and sends forth a stream of life. All this we see in Christ and Him crucified. In His heart was God's law: "I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8)

And from it flowed the blood and water which, uniting, formed one stream of life. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and

forthwith came there out blood and water." (John 19:34) "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." (1 John 5:7-8)

Jesus is still the crucified One. It is no mere figure of speech, therefore, when sinners are invited to "come to the cross." We are exhorted to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

In obeying this, we do literally come to the cross of Jesus. From this we learn that the good old hymn so often sung,--

Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raises me.
--Sarah F. Adams, Hymn: Nearer, My God, to Thee, 1841.

--expresses the truth, but not the whole truth. It seems to imply that one may get near to God in some other way than by the cross, and that the cross is the way of last resort, whereas it is the only way. "In Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)

It is by the blood of Jesus that we have boldness to enter into the holiest, into the secret dwelling place of the Most High. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," (Hebrews 10:19)

So we may amend the hymn, and sing with glad submission:

Nearer my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
Although it is the cross
That raises me.

Thank God, the cross does place us upon the throne of God, by the side of Jesus Christ; for: "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ... and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are you saved), And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:1,3-6)

God says of His anointed, "His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall His crown flourish." (Psalm 132:18)

Contrary to all human calculation, the "root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2) blossoms and buds, and fills the face of the world with fruit; (Isaiah 27:6) the crown of thorns blossoms as the rose. Every drop of blood drawn by its sharpness is a fadeless flower, and the dry, unsightly instrument of torture becomes "a crown of glory that fades not away." (1 Peter 5:4)

From all this it appears that the child of God is always on the throne, and can always give thanks to God, who "always causes us to triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Nothing, not even a defeat at the hands of our enemy, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Though sin cover us with shame, we may know that all sin and shame are on the cross, and that the cross is the throne, and so out of defeat we win in victory.

At these two extremities of His life, both of which were times of absolute helplessness,--when he was wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger, and when He hung on the cross,--Jesus Christ rightly received the homage due a king; for he was the King. Both the manger-cradle of weakness and the cross of shame, are the throne for the conqueror. The victor over sin is king.

The King a Servant

The King of kings is "the great Shepherd of the sheep." (Hebrews 13:20)

It is written of the prophet concerning Bethlehem: "Out of you shall come forth a Governor, which shall be Shepherd to my people Israel." (Micah 5:2)

The king is the one who feeds the people and his authority is in proportion to the power to serve. It is not usually so in this world, but so it ought to be. Jesus said:

"The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

In proof of this, Jesus, in immediate connection with His being lifted up upon the cross, "Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;" (John 13:3) and that He was Master and Lord, washed the feet of His disciples. (John 13) Not only so, but He tells us that when He reigns supreme in the kingdom of glory, and all His faithful followers have been gathered to Him, "He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37)

The King of kings serves as waiter! There we have proof that the greatest king on earth is the one who does most for his fellow-creatures. And now just one glance into the future. We read of the New Jerusalem that the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. (Revelation 22:3) Of the innumerable company which have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, we are told, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple." (Revelation 7:15)

A comparison with the parables in the 25th of Matthew and the 19th of Luke shows that they have entered into the joy of their Lord,--the joy of giving,--and are made rulers over many things, each one having authority according to his ability to serve. God takes His faithful servants and

associates them with himself in the government of the universe, making them ministers of His life; and this shows what is of right our privilege and occupation here, for Christ said, "He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)

And this, again, shows that believers,--all who are loosed from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ,--are even now kings and priests unto God. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; toHim be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6)

This article is included because it was referred to by another article: Psalm 21: The King and the Crown.--Present Truth, July 3, 1902