

SALVATION AND

RIGHTEOUSNESS,

AND

“The Blessing of a Fired Heart.”

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SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

(PSA. III. AND IV.)

THE two psalms I have read are the first two experimental psalms, and I want to bring before you their application to us. Now the first eight psalms are a little book of psalms by themselves. They are a synopsis of the whole book. God has been pleased to put the psalms together in a wonderful way. It took a thousand years to write the whole book. There are many writers, but the Spirit of God who inspired them has also edited them. If people admire the material world, as they do, how much more should we admire scripture! Scripture is infinitely greater than any material creation. When you come to scripture you are made to feel the finger of God, and that no man has had a hand in it save as an instrument. There is divine order in it, and no confusion; but you want eyes to see it.

In reading the Psalms I get a great sense that God alone is the Author, and man is absolutely excluded. Various writers wrote the Psalms, and sometimes one psalm is written perhaps a hundred years before another; but the Spirit of God has put them together for us in such a way that we might have the deepest instruction. You may look at them dispensationally and morally. God can give dispensational and

moral teaching at the same time, but, of course, the Psalms refer to Israel in their strict interpretation. I have said this just in way of preface.

Now in the first eight psalms you get a synopsis of the whole book. The first psalm is moral beauty, and then you get Christ officially in the second. After these you have five experimental psalms. (Psa. iii.-vii.) You get in Psalm iii., which is the first experimental one, the subject of salvation. Then the next one is righteousness. Psalm v. is holiness, Psalm vi. is discipline, Psalm vii. is God's vindication of the righteous, and Psalm viii. is the millennium. If we were really sitting down to study the book, we could go into these things, but now I am going to give a little exhortation and comfort in the application of these psalms. The first psalm is the righteous man who is suitable to God. Verse 1 is separation, verse 2 is meditation and verse 3 is prosperity. If you want to be spiritually prosperous, you must be marked by separation and meditation.

You will never bear the marks of prosperity unless you are separate from what is contrary to God, and formed by what is suitable to Him. That is what we are taught in the first psalm. Then it also suggests the blessed fact that there will be a congregation of such people—Israel, of course. Israel is the centre of the whole thing. Later on in this book we find how these people

are made suitable. God changes the man before He changes his circumstances. "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." (Heb. x. 16.) This is what God will do, and I am very glad of it. There will be a righteous congregation on this earth, and they will sit under their own vine and fig-tree.

He has a congregation of righteous people in us. It is a fine thing to get in your soul, that all that is of God abides, and what is not of God will be blown away like chaff. I think this is a very fine psalm, beloved Christians. Then in the second you get where Christ is; you get Him set on high by God. But the moral (Psa. i.) precedes the official, which is Psalm ii.

I remember writing to some one, and saying that I would like to be able to preach like some one else of whom I was speaking. The answer I got was, "I would rather see you godly than gifted." We are prone to look at that which will bring us prominently before our fellows. The second psalm is the official position, and it is a fine tonic, which I have recommended to young men. You get the rage and impotence of man on the one hand, and the quiet majesty of God on the other. I feel the current down here running against me, but there is the quiet majesty of God.

Believe me, that what is fatal to soul prosperity is that men have too large a place in our hearts. Man is too attractive to us, and that

is why we are often spiritually benumbed. What we want to do is to get under the influence of Christ. Now in this psalm the heathen are raging, and the people imagining a vain thing. On the other hand, you get the quiet majesty of God. It is a blessed thing to get into your soul the sense of the majesty of God, that all here that is opposed to Him will go to pieces. In Acts iv. they recite this psalm. They were brought up before the council, composed of people of position in this world, but these Christians had a very lively sense, in the power of the Spirit, of their link with Christ, and it is a great thing to see that God is going to have His way.

In this psalm Christ is the anointed One ; God also salutes Him as His Son. "Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee." There is a key to the Gospel of Matthew in that verse. God salutes Him. I love to think of the salutation of God in connection with the opposition of man. The Christ of God is hated in this world. We must have the Christ of scripture, and not the Christ of people's imaginations.

Let me pause for a moment and ask you, are you sensible of the grace of God that has invited you, and that you have responded to that invitation ? "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." It closes with that beautiful invitation ; God is so evangelical, He delights in grace and mercy. God invites us to share His pleasure

in His Son. My heart is deeply grateful that I have been brought in accord with the heart of God. We should be increasingly sensible of the grace of God, that our hearts have been put in accord with God's, in appreciation of His Son; we have kissed Him. That is just a little sketch of the two psalms.

Now you come to an experimental psalm, a different one altogether. It is the first experimental psalm in the book. It is wonderful to me that the first experimental portion of this book should teach us the lesson of salvation. It was written when David was suffering under the governmental hand of God. He was suffering under the hand of God for his sins. I do not know if you have ever known what it is to be in that position. If so, and you have judged the state that led to it, how good to know that you can find refuge in that blessed God. It is a very sweet thing if you think of this psalm as true of the remnant in the future.

The voices are clamouring, "There is no help for him in God." "Help" should be translated "salvation"—it is the same word in the Hebrew. Now what is to be done? He says in the midst of it all, "Thou art a shield for me." He is under pressure, but he looks up to God, and he cries with his voice. Mark, it is with his voice, not with words. If you pray to God at a time when your soul is under pressure, it takes the form of unexpressed breathings rather than

audible words. Do you know what it is to be absolutely shut up to God? He cries with his voice, and is heard out of His holy hill. He is heard from the previous psalm, where Christ is. Now, beloved friends, that is a very precious thing. He is heard from that spot where Christ is, the hill of Zion, which is a hill of grace. Salvation is known there. Stephen is a beautiful example of it. He is an example in Christianity of the truth of this psalm. Look at him, he looks stedfastly up into heaven. He says, "I see the glory of God and Jesus." In that courthouse there was not one friendly face. He was absolutely alone, and every voice said, "There is no help for him in God." In spite of this, he gazes stedfastly up into heaven. He was sustained from heaven, and he was heard. Salvation comes from heaven.

The Psalmist says, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." It is our privilege to have the peace of that place where Christ is, in our hearts. There was not a flutter in the presence of God, and there was not a flutter in Stephen's heart; that is salvation. I am an object of interest to Christ where He is, as I stand for Him where He was. I am no match for the storm, but I have a power that will enable me to stand.

Now take that verse, "If thou shalt confess Jesus as Lord:" God has made Him both Lord and Christ. He is Lord to subdue me and to

bless me. If I think of lordship, I think of His subduing power and of administration. Now a Christian is one who confesses Jesus as Lord. That is continuously characteristic of a Christian. It is not the thought of a Christian confessing to other people, though that is in it. What you want to do is to confess to Him. If you make the confession to Him, you make the confession to other people as well. You confess Jesus to be your Lord. It was Jesus who loved you and died for you. He is Lord and Christ. I will speak of Him in the latter aspect directly.

Now, beloved friends, I want to speak to you in a practical way. Do you cultivate the habit of calling on Jesus as your Lord? You have come under His control. In Acts ix., that great lordship chapter, Saul says, "Who art thou, Lord?" in reply to the Lord saying, "Why persecutest thou me?" Lower down in the chapter the Lord's voice is again heard. This time it is to Ananias; He tells him to seek out Saul. Ananias is near the Lord, and therefore knows when he is called. The Spirit is here, but what for? No man can confess Jesus as Lord but by the Spirit. He is Lord to you, you are under His control, but you must keep up the connection. Permit an illustration. Look at the electric tram car, and notice the little copper wheel which runs along under the wire. What happens if the little copper wheel slips off? Both the light and power go out because the

connection is lost. It is a great thing to keep up the connection. There is light and power in the confession of Jesus as Lord. We have got the power here, but that power is known in the confession of Jesus as Lord. What you want to do is to keep the little copper wheel under the wire, and then you can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Therefore salvation is the great key to this psalm. Now one more remark in connection with this word "salvation."

It is a very interesting thing to see that when you get a thing mentioned for the first time in scripture you get a very good idea of it. The first time this subject is mentioned is in Genesis xlix., and it comes out there in connection with Jacob's blessing of the twelve tribes. You get God's history of His earthly people from start to finish in that chapter. When Jacob comes to Dan, which is Anti-Christ, he says, "Dan is an adder by the way." The moment he touches that terrible Satanic power, of which the Psalms so largely speak, he says, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." What comes next? "Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." Why is this? Because salvation is there. There is a turning-point where he says, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." That is salvation from the Satanic influences here. He cries out in the spirit of the remnant. Jacob looks to the top. Well, it is very sweet to me that salvation is for us. I thought to

have taken it up more in detail, but time will not permit. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, and his blessing is upon his people."

Now listen to this, "The Lord direct your heart into the love of God." I cannot direct my heart into the love of God, but if I ask Him to do it He will. That is salvation for you. It works out in this way: we come into living contact with the Lord. If you come to a meeting like this, it is no good unless you look to the Lord. We like to go to meetings and hear the truth, but what we want is to be brought into living contact with the Lord. There is a great deal we listen to, and find pleasure in listening to it, but unless we come under His influence it is of no use to us. Therefore we must be under the influence of the Lord and come into contact with Him. He can direct our hearts into the love of God.

What should I do in the midst of the turmoil here? Everything around speaks of man's will working on all sides. Beloved friends, there is no wreckage at the top. If the Lord is pleased to remove His gifts, as He often is, what are you going to do? Where can we look but to the Lord? He has not failed us. All we need to do is to keep in touch with Him and we shall get all our need met on the one hand, and shall recognise what He raises up on the other. Let us look up to the Lord and keep close to Him, and we shall see what He will do. He will not

distinguish men in the flesh, but rather extinguish them. "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes ;" see what the Lord can do with the lad. He will not give His glory to another. Our poor hearts often lean on props ; we must value His gifts, but still we must not lean on any prop, but on the Lord. He will never leave us. His hands have never gone down, like Moses'. His heart is never wearied, as we often sing, "Thou weariest not, most blessed Lord, though we may weary grow." Let us take courage and remember that salvation is of the Lord.

Now in Psalm iv. we get the way of righteousness, and the two compensations found in that way. Let me tell you that the way of righteousness can only be known as we abide in the righteous One. We take character from Him. We must come under His blessed influence, otherwise we shall not go His way. I will repeat a little parable I heard lately to illustrate this. There is no effort in Christianity, but there is energy, and I would distinguish between effort and energy. I tried to be like Christ, and it was weary work. Trying made me feel that I would rather die than live. Now I will come to my parable, it is this. The sea cried and said, "Oh that I could reach to the heavens." She said, "O wind, help me." So the wind said, "I will help you," and it blew till the sea rose higher, and went up into the air, and then down

it came again. The sea fell back and said, "I shall never reach it." Just at this moment the sun shone out and said, "Lie still, and I will draw you up. I will do it all for you if you will keep under my influence." This illustrates my point. You receive the Spirit from Christ in order that you may abide in Him.

Now I am going to shew you what it is to be in the way of righteousness, and secondly, the two compensations found in that way. In Psalm iv. it says: "Hear me when I call . . . thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress [or pressure]." The first verse stands by itself. If we want to be enlarged, the Lord does it by putting us under pressure. That is God's way of doing it. Believe me, if a man is going to be in the good of the thing, he has got to go through it. Do not shrink away from the thought of being put under pressure. The pressure will be different to you and to me. God knows what each one will feel. You must not look at His ways with others to understand His ways with you. Thou has enlarged me under distress or pressure—the word really means pressure.

Now let me shew you the way of righteousness for the Christian. We want to see the moral force of it; it is not paying twenty shillings in the pound. If you do that, everybody will say, "Well done." No Christian should do less than that, for it is a terrible thing to get into

debt. But, beloved friends, that is only the edge of christian righteousness.

I may be doing the thing which every one in this town would commend; and yet it would be positively unrighteous before God. The Christian's righteousness is to be consistent with what God has made him. If God has been gracious to me, and I am not a gracious man, I am unrighteous. If He has shewn mercy to me, I must be merciful. If I seek my own glory, I am unrighteous. I will give you a verse that proves that, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." (John vii. 18.)

May the Lord give us a tender conscience before Him as to this, for the moment you have a thought in your heart of self-exaltation, you are unrighteous to Him. You exalt yourself at the expense of Christ, and that is moral degradation. You say, "Lord, unless Thou dost help me, I cannot preach to-night." You tell the Lord that you are number *five*, that is the number of weakness, and then He will put number *seven* to you and make you strong. When you have been supported, and He has done it all, then you will begin to think "What a fine fellow I am!" You do not say it, but it works in your heart. Christianity touches the inward springs. Every bit of self-exaltation is positive unrighteousness to Christ. Righteousness is to

seek the glory of Him who sent Him. I believe in Christ-consciousness. When you are Christ-conscious, you will abandon yourself.

Now the first compensation in the way of righteousness is that your heart is assured before Him, because you have an uncondemning conscience, and therefore like the Psalmist you know your prayer is heard. The second is that you are in the light of His countenance. (Psa. iv. 6.) I am under righteous obligation to you ; it works out in many ways.

When a man once came to me to collect the taxes, I said to him, "You are a minister of God." You are to recognise what God has instituted. Righteousness is to answer to the love of God, in showing it to one another. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" What is the answer to that? It is this, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him." Now what is the next compensation? Turn to verse 6, "Who will show us any good?" Every unconverted man and every carnally-minded Christian is asking that. Where is good to be found? The One who sought the glory of Him who sent Him can give it to you. It is found in being in the light of His countenance: "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Do you think corn and wine will make you happy? No, corn and wine will not

make you happy, but the light of His countenance will. And you get that in the way of righteousness. You have the sense of His approval, and you are in the sunshine of His favour.

This is a Neginoth psalm, that is, a stringed instrument psalm. I like stringed instrument music. With the wind instruments there is effort, that is why it represents the prayer meeting, we bring our needs and wants to God. The music from a stringed instrument is the sweetest; when you play on that, you are not conscious of wanting anything; you have nothing to pray for, but only to praise. The proposal in verse 6 is that God will put His love into my heart by the Spirit, that I shall not want anything I have not got. "I will both lay me down in peace," &c. That is the rest of satisfaction, which is known in the light of His countenance.

"I laid me down and slept" (Psalm iii. 5), that is the rest connected with trouble. Men said to the Lord when He was here, that He had nothing to show, but He had. He had the sense of God's approval, and gladness in His heart. When we are there, we forget ourselves.

I advise you to read the Book of Habakkuk; you will see it is different from all the other prophets. It has no date, and in that respect it is like the Psalms. In this book the prophet begins with weeping, and ends with singing. He feels the state of ruin which surrounds him; how could it be possible for any one walking

with God not to feel the ruin of things here? Habakkuk says, "What shall I do?" Then the Lord takes him up into the tower, and shows him Christ. Now his heart begins to rejoice. Later on, the weeper becomes a preacher, and his text is, "The just shall live by faith." Then he prays, and says, "Revive thy work, O Lord." It will make you cry out, "Revive thy work, O Lord," when you see that the testimony of the Lord will not fail. Habakkuk plays the sweetest music at the end. If you begin with weeping, you will end with singing. You could not sing if you thought of the desolation here, but the moment you get your eye on Christ you can sing. The beloved apostle played the stringed instrument in the gaol at Philippi. He said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," &c. He said, "I cannot preach Christ, but I can enjoy him."

Sometimes we have to be taken aside because we are too big and too busy to be loved. If the jailor was present when that letter was read to the Philippians, I can imagine him saying to his wife, "Paul is the same man as when he was playing on the stringed instrument in the prison, years ago." It is the continuity of the man which I so like. What made him sing praises to God? It was because he was in the way of righteousness, in the way of seeking the Lord's glory. Now I trust you will learn some little lessons by these remarks, though I feel the fragmentary way in which I have put it.

“TO THE CHIEF SINGER ON MY
STRINGED INSTRUMENTS.”

(HAB. III. 17-19.)

THOUGH the fig tree shall not blossom,
And the vines are bare,
Though the fatness of the olive
May not be my share ;
Though the fields are not in verdure,
And the flocks are dead—
Yet the God of my salvation
Doth anoint my head.

God, the God of my salvation,
Bears me on His wing,
Far above to my high places,
There with Him to sing.
He will make my feet like hinds' feet,
Guide my steps to tread
Spheres of light and life abounding.
Where His love is shed.

Oh! “Chief Singer,” tune my spirit
Into perfect praise,
For Thy worship, for Thine honour,
Songs my heart would raise,
Touch the “instrument of ten strings,”
Vibrate every key,
Swell the chord, awaken music
In my soul for Thee.

S. C. M. A.



“THE BLESSING OF A FIXED HEART.”

(PSA. CXIV. AND CXVI. 1.)

THE gist of what I am about to say to you can be presented in a few sentences. It is this, the work of God for us at the cross, and the work of God in us by His Spirit, and the ways of God with us down here, are the activities of His love in order to bring us into the light of His purpose for us, that we might have the blessing of a “fixed heart.”

Now perhaps you will say, why do you choose the Psalms for such a subject? Of course, I must refer to christian scriptures, I mean those scriptures of the New Testament which bring out Christianity. I will bring it into the psalm as I open it up; God’s ways with His earthly people set forth very largely in type His thoughts for us. All scripture is written for us and for our instruction. In the Psalms, properly speaking, we are not contemplated. You do not get Christianity in the Psalms, but you get the blessing of God’s earthly people in the latter day. You get great principles in the Psalms which are very helpful. Some of us have said, “Ah! it does not apply to us, but to God’s earthly people;” but I believe we have sadly neglected this book, and lost thereby.

What I like in the Psalms is, that you have what is moral as well as dispensational, and it is connected with the experience of the soul. Dear Christians, our great danger is being too theoretical; the truth is given to us for practice.

I want to know how these blessed doctrines work out in the history of my soul. That is why I turn to the Psalms, because it is presented there in a very beautiful way. Now I would like to make this remark. Any one reading this psalm must be struck with the triumphant tone of it. This psalm was, I believe, sung before the Passover; indeed, the three psalms, cxiii., cxiv. and cxv., were all sung before the Passover. Psalms cxvi. to cxviii. are the psalms they sing after the Passover. Psalm cxviii. was probably sung when they went up the Mount of Olives—Jesus could sing going up the Mount of Olives, with death before Him: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Psalm cxiv. is a very triumphant one, as the most casual reader must see. It sets forth God's great triumph for Israel and for us. When God brought His earthly people out of Egypt, He had two great thoughts in view. These two great thoughts are set forth in the second verse of our psalm: "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion." (Ver. 2.) They are that He should dwell with them, and reign over them, and these two thoughts come out in the song of the Red Sea. In the song of the Red Sea

they rise up to these two thoughts. What I want to shew you is this: in the Red Sea and Jordan you get the power of death, and that was lying across the path of God in connection with His purpose for His people. Now I have come to the point. It is a wonderful link, that that which was a witness of God's judgment now becomes the everlasting witness of His love through His blessed Son. Death was here and claimed all. Think of it, dear Christians, death was the strongest thing here. The eater and the strong one was death, but there came down in the person of the Son of God that which was stronger than death. He brought the holy love of God into this world. Who but a divine Person could bring the love of God here? What a wonderful thing that He lit up this dark world with the love that gave Him and sent Him! He came from the abode of love into this world, and He brought the light of God's love into it. On He went in grace, He alone was competent to do it. We discover who He is by what He wrought. He has been into death, and He has lit up the darkness of death by the holy love of God. In this, God was saying in unmistakable language to us, "I want you to know Me, in order that you may love Me and live to Me." The greatness of the gospel lies in the word "revelation"—God revealed. He has been pleased to reveal Himself. In every step of love's blessed journey God was

saying in unmistakable language, "I want you to know Me." Our blessing now and evermore lies in the knowledge of God. Death had to give way; both the Red Sea and the Jordan had to give way because God was there. Let us come now to what it typified. Samson's riddle ("Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness") was God's great riddle, and only One was competent to solve it. The blessed Jesus, the Son of God, solved the riddle. He has done it. He set forth in the dark and distant spot the infinite blessedness of what God is. That which was the witness of His judgment now becomes the everlasting witness of His heart. Such a God is surely worthy to be loved, and to be lived to, now and for ever. Now my point is this, that the first part of the triumph of God is that He makes death to be the witness of His love. I wish you could say it, dear Christians, that in the death of Christ you have lost yourselves and found God. In the death of Christ I see God's perfect answer to all that I am. He has ended my sad history in His death. If I think of the cross, I think of another psalm: "Thou hast searched me, and known me." Where was that? At the cross. There I was exposed, and God was disclosed. So that God has given an answer in the death of Christ to all that I am as a natural man. That death entitles me to turn from myself to God—a very good exchange.

What constitutes my happiness is that I know God.

Now the other part of the triumph is that “He turns the rock into standing water, and the flint into a fountain of waters.” There you see the other side. It is to make our hearts responsive to His love. And for the Christian to love is to live, and to live is to love. The first answer in us to the love of God is to respond to that love.

The first action of the life of Christ is Godward in holy love. And when a man begins to love God he begins to live. Only the Spirit of God is competent to make my heart answer to the love of God. That is how the love is put into our hearts. Now, beloved friends, that is the triumph of God. He says of Israel, “I will take all the trouble with you, because I want your love. I sent My Son, and He took love’s journey, all because I want your love.” Therefore He will have His earthly people to love Him by-and-bye. That is the reason I have read the first verse of Psalm cxvi., “I love the Lord.” The hearts of His people answer back. This is the first time you get in the Psalms the words, “I love the Lord.” God has gained the hearts of His people, and they say, “I love the Lord.” Therefore we must be drawing near to the end of the Book of Psalms; Psalm cxviii. is the close of the book as to subject matter.

Now let me give you a christian scripture, and

may it lead you to prayer, that you may realise it. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Oh! the grandeur of that! I put it to you, do you think the Son of God would tantalise us with impossibilities? The water that I shall give him, &c., what does that mean? That my heart in the power of the Spirit shall well up in answer to the holy love of God; that I shall be delivered from lust, that is, I shall not wish for a thing I have not got; something that shall satisfy our hearts in such a way that we shall not wish for a thing we have not got. The work of God in us by the Spirit is to make our hearts responsive to that love. "He breathed on them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." He breathed His own life into them that you and I might answer to His love. Say to yourself, that is God's thought for me. Do not look at yourself, but at the grandeur of the proposal.

I will give you a few instances from Psalm cxvi. of how the hearts of His people turn back to Him. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." "I will pay my vows unto the Lord," &c. But the lever to the whole psalm is "I love the Lord." "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free," &c., the law of the Spirit

of life is to love God. The law of sin and death is to love myself. Permit an illustration. I say to you I love my mother, I revere her memory. That love I have for her never started with me, it started with her. Let God love you into loving Him back again. Let the cross be the lesson book from which you learn it. “The love of God shed abroad in our hearts,” &c., that is love realised. Our hearts are made responsive. Do not look into your heart, you will not see it there.

A man once said to me, “I am waiting for the blessing.” I said, “What is the blessing you are waiting for?” “I am waiting for the love of God to be shed abroad in my heart,” he replied. I asked him for the passage, but he did not know. I took my Bible and showed him Romans v. 5. He stopped reading at the end of the verse. I said, “Read on.” “For when we were yet without strength . . . God commendeth his love towards us,” &c. That is where you see it, not in yourself. When God speaks of realised love, He points to where the love can be seen, that it may be kept up. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us” (1 John iv. 9), look there and see it. If we are exhorted to love one another, we are shown where the love was manifested, that there may be a realisation of it, and then there will be the exhibition of it. That is as simple as daylight. Love was manifested *toward* us in order that it might be realised *in* us. And realised in us to be ex-

hibited by us. We love up to God, and out to the brethren. We love the begotten ones, because we love Him who begat.

Now I am going to another subject: the ways of God with us. Turn to Psalm cvii. 43. Also the first verse of the next psalm. These two psalms are dovetailed. My third point was the ways of God with us. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things," that is the way of God with us. "Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord," the love of God is behind all His ways with us.

Beloved brethren, we miss a lot through not seeing that God's love is behind all His ways with us. In Psalm cvii. you get God's ways with His people, and the psalm touches the history of every child of God that ever lived in this world. The first nine verses are the first section—they give the ways of God. You find God's people are "in a solitary way," and they are "hungry and thirsty." Well now, God brings them into a dwelling-place, and He satisfies their hunger and thirst. He creates the desire in His people, and He satisfies that desire. These are His normal ways with His people. "He satisfieth the longing soul," &c., there is comfort for you. He will do it for you. If He creates in your heart the hunger and thirst, He does it in order to meet it. "You have as much of Christ as you want," an aged servant of God once said.

Let us read verse 10: "Such as sit in darkness," &c., they got there through their self-will. They ceased to be simple, and took matters into their own hands. Then they come under the government of God. Here are these people sitting in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the words of God. Is there not a lot of rebellion? Christianity is exceedingly simple, but we are not simple about it. We think we can do better for ourselves than God can do for us, but that will lead us into affliction and sorrow. Let us read on: "He brought down their heart with labour," &c. If we make mistakes through lack of nearness to God, we have to suffer the consequences, but He hears our cry. "Then they cried unto the Lord, and he heard them." He will hear us, not according to our cry, but according to Christ's cry. He has heard His cry. Cherish that in your heart. "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death," He did hear their cry. "Praise the Lord, for he hath broken the gates of brass." That is section No. 2.

Section No. 3 begins, "Fools because of their transgression," &c. (Vers. 17-22.) Here it is more folly than rebellion. They cry unto the Lord, and He hears them. Verse 22 finishes section 3.

Now they are getting back and they sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Section 4 begins with the seafaring people.

They go down to the sea in ships. What does this mean? It means that Israel go down to the sea of nations, and they are tossed about to this very day. For us, it means that there are things that are legitimate for me, subject to the will of God. I may want a little home of my own—that is, I am launching a little bark on the sea. Very well, "Such shall have trouble in the flesh." He will raise the storm. You reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man—do you ever know what it is to feel like that? You are at your wit's end, and you cry to the Lord. If He raises the storm, He can bring you to the calm. I have got my little bark out on the sea every day of the week, and I need priestly grace and support.

I know what it is to steer my little bark into the desired haven (the assembly), and there I drop my anchor. Look at verse 32. "Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders;" there is the assembly in principle. You have your home circle, etc., your little ship is on the sea, and up and down you go; but mind you, you may have God with you. He will teach you in these things what a blessed God He is. He will bring your bark into the haven and you drop your anchor and you praise Him in the assembly. When there, I say, "Lord, I have felt your touch in the week, and your support, and now I leave my place, and come to you in

your place.” Then the remainder of the psalm is a recital of God’s governmental ways. Now I come to the last verse—it is the moral conclusion. “Whoso is wise and will observe these things,” what shall they do? They shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, which is behind it all. Observe His ways with you. If people had very easy times down here, they would be very uninteresting people.

Directly I see the storm rising, I say, I will watch that man, God is going to make a man of him. The crying need of the moment is for experimental and practical ministry. You can learn doctrine, and recite it clearly if you have a good memory. If you are going to be a man of God, He will put you through your paces.

Now my heart begins to say, “O God, my heart is fixed.” (Psa. cviii. 1.) God has been pleased to take the halves of two psalms and stitch them together in Psalm cviii. God emphasises by repetition. The purpose of God is in Psalm cviii. If God takes all that trouble with you He must have some purpose for you. I repeat my little motto. It is this, “I had to come here, because I had to go there.” Many a time I say it. I had to come into this world, because I had to go there. That is God’s purpose for me—that is my business—“O God, my heart is fixed.” Caleb says in principle, “O God, my heart is fixed.” I say, “But, Caleb, you have the manna, and the palm-trees, and the

water out of the rock." "Thank God," says he, "but listen to me, 'O God, my heart is fixed.'" "I brought him word again as it was in mine heart." (Josh xiv. 7.)

Let me give you New Testament language for a fixed heart. "All things work together for good to them that love God." All His ways work together for good to those that love God, and are called according to His purpose. Many a time I have watched a piece of driftwood washed up on shore being tossed to and fro by the waves. I have said to myself, "That is often just like you, it is washed up and then washed back again—you are a creature of circumstances at such times. On the other hand, I have seen a huge ironclad riding majestically upon the waves. I would prefer to be like the ironclad, rather than like the piece of wood tossed at the mercy of the waves. Look at the ironclad—that is, "O God, my heart is fixed." It is the light of His purpose that fixes our heart. "One thing I do," etc. Mary came and sat at the Lord's feet; that sets forth what I mean. She sat at His feet to get her heart fixed. The "good part" is to sit at His feet. To her God was saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him"—hear Him, not serve Him, like Martha. Be a Mary to-night, and get your heart fixed. He said, "Mary, you are wanted in the spot where I came from." Beloved Christians, you are wanted in heaven. The Son came

because the Father wanted you in that spot. When that gets into your heart, your heart will be fixed. It will teach you how to pray—"Father, hallowed be thy name," etc. It is not Me, My, Mine; but Thee, Thy, Thine. Normal prayer is Thee, Thy, Thine.

Look at Psa. cviii. 7, and I will close. God hath spoken in His holiness; He said, "I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem," etc. Gilead is mine; you may say they have turned out a bad lot, still He says, "They are mine." "Moab is my washpot," God will wash His people through Moab. Philistia, I will triumph over you—that is the triumph of God. I do not wonder at the close of the psalm, "Through God we shall do valiantly." Why you are not victorious in conflict is because you do not sing. The man whose heart is fixed is the man who sings. The Lord send you away with the sense in your soul that you are the object of the purpose of God. May you be able to say, "Through God we shall do valiantly." In conclusion, I would say again what I said at the outset, that the work of God for us at the cross, and His work in us by His Spirit, and His ways with us are to bring us into the light of His purpose, that we may know the blessing of a fixed heart. May you know it.

