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“The Book of Psalms”

by
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About the Author



The Rev Dr Timothy Tow (1920-2009) was the founding father of the Bible-Presbyterian movement in Southeast Asia, after he returned to Singapore in 1950, having caught the spirit of the 20th century Reformation movement in Faith Theological Seminary. He was the pastor of Life BPC (1950-2003) and True Life BPC (2003-2009), and principal of Far Eastern Bible College (1962-2009). A regular contributor to the RPG, he had also written more than 35 books. His RPG writings on “The Book of Psalms” were first published during the years 1988, 1991 and 2002.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS

(by J. Sidlow Baxter)

What words can adequately introduce this Book of Psalms to us? Who shall say how much it has meant to godly hearts down the years? Here is poetry which more than vies with that of Milton and Shakespeare, yet it is the poetry of downright reality; and, as “the body is more than the raiment,” so here, the reality is greater than the poetry which expresses it. Here, too, is strong theology—not, however, any merely theoretic theology, but the practical theology of vivid human experience; and, as “the life is more than meat,” so is concrete experience more than abstract doctrine. It is this, fundamentally, which has made the Book of Psalms such a treasure to the godly.

“Hymns to the gods of Greece have been preserved,” says C. J. Ellicott, “but how vast is their difference from the Psalms! Let the reader compare one of those translated by Shelley, with any song out of the Psalter. Pretty compliments and well-turned flatteries intended to propitiate he will find, set, indeed, in melodious verse that celebrates the birth of gods and demi-gods; but no wrestling in prayer with tearful eyes and downcast head, and the full assurance of faith, such as has made the Psalms for all time the expression of the devotional feelings of men.”

This Book of Psalms is a limpid lake which reflects every mood of man’s changeful sky. It is a river of consolation which, though swollen with many tears, never fails to gladden the fainting. It is a garden of flowers which never lose their fragrance, though some of the roses have sharp thorns. It is a stringed instrument which registers every note of praise and prayer, of triumph and trouble, of gladness and sadness, of hope and fear, and unites them all in the full multi-chord of human experience.

ONLY TWO WAYS

In the eyes of God, there are only two ways in man's goings. The Psalmist has discovered this. It is such an important issue in life that he must tell us on the opening page of this Divine poetry-book.

The two ways are: (a) The way of the godly that leads to heaven. (b) The way of the ungodly that leads to hell (Ps 1:6). In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), Jesus confirms what the Psalmist has said. He says, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" (Matt 7:13-14). Reader, on which way are you?

At the end of life's journey, Psalm 1:5 tells of a judgment day when every soul must appear before God. The ungodly will be pronounced guilty and sent downwards. The godly will be happily acquitted and sent upwards. Which verdict will you hear for yourself?

In this earthly life also there is a great difference between the two. The man who follows God and keeps himself from bad company, who reads the Bible and meditates on its teachings, morning and evening, grows sturdy like a tree planted by some water-way. He draws his strength daily from God's Word and leads a spiritually prosperous life, luxuriant in good works that glorify God and benefit men. Is that not seen in the life of the Psalmist himself, even King David?

As to the ungodly, the man who plots evil and holds on to his unrighteous gains, we see how he must come to ruin. He is like the husks of grain, blown away by the wind in the winnowing process. The sad ending of David's enemies (eg. Ahithophel, Joab) is like this. There is not only a dead end in the judgment to come, but also a sad end in the way he goes from now.

THOUGHT: Which way am I heading towards?

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 139:23-24.)

MONDAY, JULY 2

PSALM 2

REVELATION 6:15-17

*“Blessed are the
undefiled in the way ...”*

CHRIST THE MESSIAH, THE ANOINTED PRINCE

Though Psalm 2 has no title of authorship, Peter in Acts 4:25 names David the inspired prophet behind these stanzas. This Psalm naturally divides into four parts, not only from the sense, but also from the stanzas, which consist of three verses each. The fourfold division is: (I) The Nations Revolting (Ps 2:1-3); (II) The LORD Reigning (Ps 2:4-6); (III) The Son Proclaimed (Ps 2:7-9); (IV) The Nations Reproved (Ps 2:10-12).

As Peter viewed the rebellious events of his day through the lenses of this Psalm he saw how vain were the machinations of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews gathered together against the Christ of God. So must the eruptions of wicked men in our day be assessed in this light that we may not be dismayed when the enemies of God persecute the Church of Jesus Christ. Our hearts will be gravely troubled under persecution unless we realise that there is One Supreme Lord who gives rule even to wicked kings and dictators (Dan 4:17). What a consolation is this knowledge of God’s sovereignty to the Christian minority living among a hostile people. In times of testing, the faithful will take courage as they hear Christ’s words in Revelation 2:10. God the Son will sit on the throne of David in that day to rule over the whole world. “God’s anointed is appointed and shall not be disappointed” (Spurgeon). He is moreover given rule over His enemies for an inheritance. Jehovah has given His Anointed a rod of iron by which He will break them in pieces like potsherd in the Judgment Day.

A message is given to the rebellious to pay homage to the Prince. To “*kiss the Son*” (Ps 2:12) is to show subjection in inferiors or religious adoration in worshippers. When we see a man being kissed by kings and presidents, who calls himself “Vicar of Christ,” i.e. “representative of Christ on earth as the head of His Church” (Chambers), we see him usurping this honour that is reserved to Jesus alone. When the Son becomes angry for allegiance not properly pledged to Him, they will “*perish from the way*” (Ps 2:12).

THOUGHT: (Read Revelation 6:15-17.)

PRAYER: Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 3

PSALM 3

2 SAMUEL 15:32-17:23

*“... who walk in the law
of the LORD.”*

“MY SON, MY SON!”

What greater tragedy could you imagine than a son should rebel against his father? And in the course of rebellion the closest friends of the father should side with the son? When such a rebellion involves a king, it shakes up the whole nation. In the struggle between David and Absalom, every shade of human intrigue is revealed with stark nakedness. The darkest of it all is treachery and the scoundrel in David’s case is Ahithophel. We see also the brightest in loyalty, and the hero is Hushai. This loyal friend of David was God’s instrument against Ahithophel. (Read 2 Samuel 15:32-17:23.)

While we implore the Almighty for help, we must be willing to do His bidding. As King George VI rallied the British Empire to a Day of Humiliation and Prayer when attacked by Hitler’s Germany, he admonished his subjects, “Let us pray not so much that God be on our side as we be on God’s side.” David has triumphed over every enemy because he is on God’s side and God is on his side. Is our heart right with God and man?

This Psalm is made up of four stanzas inasmuch as there are four stances of David’s seeking before his God.

- I. Ps 3:1-2: David cries out to God for the rebellion against him. How the enemy delights to see God’s children down and out! Do we exult over our enemy when he falls? Heed Solomon’s admonition in Proverbs 24:17-18.
- II. Ps 3:3-4: David’s prayer is answered! David has confidence that he will return to his palace because God is his garrison. So is everyone who prays earnestly and finds peace in his heart.
- III. Ps 3:5-6: One extended result of peace from answered prayer is sound sleep, even when one is checkmated on every side. Physical strength is begotten of spiritual strength (Ps 127).
- IV. Ps 3:7-8: Having seen how God has silenced the evil-speaking enemy and the devouring enemy, David pleads for further deliverance. David’s declaration of help obtained from a sovereign God is the basis of Calvin’s doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, not of man.

THOUGHT: “What a friend we have in Jesus.”

PRAYER: Lord, let me always be on Thy side.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4

PSALM 4

PSALM 139:23-24

*Blessed is he who
keeps God's holy law.*

“... MY HEART IS PURE” (Tennyson)

One significance about Psalm 4 is the title addressed of the Lord: “*God of my righteousness.*” This is the only occasion when He is so addressed.

David is not showing a “holier than thou” attitude as if he has no sin at all. David is confident rather that in a certain matter he is falsely accused of by his enemy, he can claim innocence without compunction. His heart is at ease as he calls upon God to be his Judge. Hence he addresses Him, “*O God of my righteousness.*” He can say with Sir Galahad in Tennyson, “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure.” Though he stands innocent in the matter concerned, before God he can only beg for mercy and favour. Though we are clean in our individual transactions, we are unworthy and undone at all times before a thrice holy God!

David, who has experienced God’s help before this in relieving him from a tight spot, pleads with assurance in the present circumstances. Having been fully assured in his heart that his prayer is heard, he can tell his enemies that the appointed of the Lord will not be disappointed. If the Lord has called you, and you serve Him with all your heart, you need not be afraid either! A word to those who take sin lightly: “Tremble and sin not!” Let them, instead of plotting mischief while they are awake upon their bed (Ps 36:4) rather search their own hearts if there be any wicked way in themselves. This exercise of examining one’s innermost self is reflected in David’s prayer in Psalm 139:23-24. If we often deceive ourselves, don’t we need to search our hearts, our intentions and motives, if they are for self or for God? When one has the tenfold strength from a sense of one’s accepted standing before God, then one can rejoice in the Lord despite taunting hurled from every quarter. “... *for the joy of the LORD is your strength*” (Neh 8:10). One result of such strength in the Lord is a peaceful sleep, a security in Him who watches over us not only in daylight but also through the night.

THOUGHT: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!”

PRAYER: Teach me to examine myself daily before Thee, O Lord.

THURSDAY, JULY 5

PSALM 5

ISAIAH 55:6-7

*Blessed is he who
remembers God's Day ...*

DAVID'S SELF-EXAMINATION IN HIS MORNING PRAYERS

The word "Nehiloth" in the title of this Psalm is thought by some to mean "heritage." Others say it refers to "wind instruments," inasmuch as "Neginoth" in Psalm 4 means "stringed instruments." Calvin says, "I adopt the opinion of those who hold that it was either a musical instrument or a tune; but of what particular kind I consider it of little importance to ascertain." Of greater importance is the substance of the Psalm proper wherein David set us the example of praying in the morning. Spurgeon says, "An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening." Another says, "To seek God early is to seek Him earnestly."

Of even greater importance than praying early in the day is our heart-condition (Ps 66:18). Therefore David reminds himself of a God who hates wickedness, especially those who practise lying and deceit and murder. David's prayers in the morning lead him to worship with others in God's House, and should he be afar off, he would pray towards His holy temple. Do we seek God early everyday and do we go to Church every Lord's Day? When in travel and are away from Church, do we set aside a time to worship Him under different circumstances?

As David is surrounded by enemies of all kinds, from the treacherous to the flattering (Prov 29:5), he prays for their destruction inasmuch as these who lay wait for him are rebels against the Lord. So David prays for God to lead him in a straight path lest he be sidetracked into their net. He encourages all who trust the Lord like him to rejoice in God their Defender. The God who hates iniquity will conversely bless the upright in heart. He will surround them with His favour and shield them from all harm.

Will God grant us our requests? There are so many obstacles set up against us by our enemies, but with His help we will be delivered. He who seeks God every morning and every Lord's Day in His House with godly fear and worship will not be ashamed.

THOUGHT: (Read Isaiah 55:6-7.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I seek Thee early every morning with godly fear.

FRIDAY, JULY 6

PSALM 6

HEBREWS 4:16

... to keep it holy unto the Lord.

SWIMMING IN MY BED OF TEARS

This is one of David's seven penitential psalms. In Psalm 6:3-4 he is spiritually downcast. In verses 2 and 5 he seems to be struck down by sickness. In verses 7 and 10 he talks of confrontation with his enemies. When troubles come, they come not alone.

Those who persist to be "masters of their own fate and captains of their own souls" (William E. Henley) perish in their own strength. This is sterile stoicism, a fatalism to suffering and pain. O how sad and how lonely, and sadder and lonelier still, as one advances in age, without God!

Christians have David for an example. When misfortunes come David would take them to be chastenings from the Lord. He would quickly run to the Heavenly Father for help. He casts himself before One whom he could trust would do him good. He implores, first of all, His mercies, for there is nothing good in him he could rely upon to offer before God. He keeps on pleading and in the heat of his emotions he bursts into tears. His weeping from mixed strong emotions sends torrents of tears onto his bed, so much so that it almost becomes a swimming pool! This hyperbole vividly describes how strong his tearful pleadings with God are. It is good medicine to let go the pent-up emotions of the heart. To keep them and hem them makes the heavy burden heavier. Our strained emotions can harm the mind and body, eg. causing us to stammer. -A Christian in communication with a loving Heavenly Father is like a child of a mother's love. He can run to Mother's bosom and sob it out in Mother's embrace. Read Hebrews 4:16.

When we empty our miserable selves before Him, then He will fill us with gladness (Ps 30:5). After a night of soaking-wet weeping for Him, David wakes up in the first rays of a new day with a light heart! He feels his oppression is removed, particularly the "*workers of iniquity*," his personal enemies. His prayers have been answered.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 27:14.)

PRAYER: May I always be found waiting on Thee, O Lord.

SATURDAY, JULY 7

PSALM 6

2 PETER 3:8

Thank God for the week.

HOW LONG, LORD?

You have been long in coming, love says. So miserly are we of the minutes, so leaden-paced is the beat of the pendulum, when our heart stands on the tiptoe of expectation. Moments lengthen to hours when we suffer and await deliverance, just as hours contract to moments when the heart is young and joyous.

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE THE TRIAL CEASE? When we are entering into the furnace, we like to make bargains with God that it shall not last beyond a certain hour; but He never tells us, lest patience might miss her perfect work. He says simply that it is enough to suffer one moment at a time.

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE DELIVERANCE ARRIVE? Long ago we sent for reinforcements; and since then the battle has been waxing more fierce. We have looked eagerly to the horizon to see the relieving column, clear-cut on the skyline; but in vain. We think we can hold out no more. We have strained at the oar to the last degree of strength, and if some deliverance does not come to us, the fourth watch of night will see us drifting helplessly to destruction. "Where is thy God?" the enemy cries; and we are tempted to think ourselves forsaken and forgotten.

HOW LONG, LORD, ERE THE ADVENT BREAK? He said that He would come quickly. But the weary centuries pass; and, strain our ears as we may, we cannot detect His princely footfall along the corridor of time.

Cease, fond heart, thy complaining. Delay is not denial. He counts a thousand years as a day. He is coming on the wings of every wind; already He is nigh, even at the doors. Never a moment too early, and not a moment too late.

THOUGHT: Why do I murmur and complain?

PRAYER: Lord, may I remember that Thou art only a whisper away.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 8

PSALM 7

JAMES 4:11

Day of all the week the best!

APPEAL TO GOD AGAINST THE BLACK SLANDERER

“*Shiggaion*,” which occurs also in Habakkuk 3 in the plural form, has the sense of “wandering.” One interpretation is that this Psalm is to be sung to a “wandering” tune, a tune full of variations of tone. Such a tune seems fitting to the words of this Psalm.

Who is Cush the Benjamite? Some think Cush is a hidden name for Saul, for he was from the house of Benjamin. Others consider the name Cush as symbolical of the dark malice of David's enemy, inasmuch as a Cushite, an Ethiopian, is black. In Calvin's opinion, David is here referring simply to a wicked accuser by the name of Cush. With all these thoughts in mind, we may be justified to title this Psalm “Appeal to God Against the Black Slanderer.”

To slander is to falsely accuse another before a third person. This is punishable by law. What aggravates this slandering of David, whether before the king, his ministers, or the people, is that David was at peace with his accuser and had even delivered the same from trouble (Ps 7:4). Slander is character assassination so often practised by the ungrateful and jealous. So like mad dogs they bite the hand that feeds them.

We who are confronted by such a situation in our innocence (Ps 7:3) and are stuck as it were in a hole, with no one to help, let us remember with David that there is a God to appeal to (Ps 7:1), who will deliver judgment for the righteous against all the forces of evil. David's defence against slander is in God. David believes that the evil perpetrated by his enemy will boomerang against his enemy in the end (Ps 7:15-16).

Divine retribution comes swift and sure, or long delayed, but it will surely come. Let us refrain from speaking guile against our brother. Martin Luther would not listen to anyone who should speak a word against his brother in his absence.

THOUGHT: (Read James 4:11.)

PRAYER: Forgive my evil speaking, Lord. May I always remember James 4:11a.

MONDAY, JULY 9

PSALM 8

ACTS 3:19

Let us live each day for Jesus.

“HOW GREAT THOU ART!”

Though man straddles the skies, he rarely looks out of his cabin-window to behold the glories of God’s creation. What he sees are hordes of his own kind queuing and rushing each day in a struggling existence, himself a speck in the surging human tide. How stifled is his soul! Let him return to his status of an earthworm. Let him look up to the night-blue sky above and sing in adoration with David in Psalm 19:1. Let us with David’s child-simple faith praise the Almighty. The children’s innocent voices are a delight to both God and men, except those who are hardened enemies to the Truth. Our Lord quoted Psalm 8:2 to silence the chief priests and scribes who resented the children’s Hosannas to the Son of David, their Lord and Creator. It is when we see the wonders of God’s creation that we sink back into our smallness. Yet, we are the apex of God’s creation, and the apple of His eye (Ps 17:8).

Though we are “*a little lower than the angels*” by our mortality, and Jesus who has taken upon Himself our flesh and blood to die in our stead is also “*made a little lower than the angels*” (Heb 2:9-18), yet we are to triumph with Him who is our Head, to be crowned with glory and honour. In Jesus Christ we have Paradise regained. We who are sons by adoption in Him shall reign together with Him over the whole creation “*when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*” (Acts 3:19).

In spite of our rebellion in Adam, the mandate to man to “*have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth*” remains (Gen 1:28). Alas, it is when man tries to invade God’s territory, the spheres above our air-region, that disasters occur to put man in his proper place.

In conclusion, let us echo with David. Let us, “like a good composer, the poet returns to his keynote, falling back, as it were, into his first state of wondering adoration” (Spurgeon).

THOUGHT: “How Great Thou Art.”

PRAYER: Forgive my pride, O Lord. May I always see myself as a worm.

TUESDAY, JULY 10

PSALM 9

JEREMIAH 9:23-24

Every day with Jesus ...

TRIUMPH OVER THE HEATHEN

“*Muth-labben*” means “Death of the Son.” Scofield thinks it is possibly connected with 2 Samuel 12:20. Certain commentators think the Son here refers to the Son of Perdition in Goliath. David wrote this triumphal Psalm to strengthen the church militant on earth till she becomes the church triumphant in heaven. (Remember Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress.)

Psalm 9 may be divided into two parts paralleling each other as follows:

- | <u>Part I</u> | | <u>Part II</u> | |
|---|--|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Jubilant thanksgiving
(v 1-6) | | 1. Similar thoughts
(v 15-16) | |
| 2. Confidence in the future
(v 7-12) | | 2. Similar thoughts
(v 17-18) | |
| 3. Closing prayer
(v 13-14) | | 3. Similar thoughts
(v 19-20) | |

Although David had fought hard to vanquish his enemy, pride did not enter his head. He gave all glory to God to whom he looked always for help. His strength over his enemy is this lowly attitude that gains God’s favour (1 Pet 5:5). God was so pleased with David’s loving obedience that He called him “*a man after his own heart*” (1 Sam 13:14). On the other hand, God rejected King Saul for being self-willed and vainglorious. Whereas God readily pardoned David in the matter of Bathsheba because David acknowledged his sins in deepest contrition, Saul the stubborn and self-exalting found no consolation of forgiveness. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Having experienced God’s mercies and judgment, David can look to the future with confidence. Notice the future tense that prevails in Psalm 9:7-12. On that day, the humble will cry to Him and they will be heard.

This hymn closes with prayer for mercy and a holy determination to praise the Lord before the multitudes. This threefold thanksgiving, confidence and prayer recurs in Psalm 9:15-20 as a sort of sweet refrain.

THOUGHT: “Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life ...”

PRAYER: Forgive my pride in self, O Lord. May humility rule over me.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11

PSALM 10

GENESIS 18:23-26

... is better than the day before.

PETITION AGAINST OPPRESSORS OF THE POOR/ORPHANED

Although there is no title to Psalm 10, a good many commentators including Calvin consider this to be from “the sweet psalmist of Israel.” Calvin regards this Psalm as a complaint that “fraud, extortion, cruelty, violence and all kind of injustice, prevailed every where in the world.” How true! We say it this way today: “Big fish eat small fish.”

It is most ironical to see the wicked, mighty and powerful, the bully, while persecuting and eating up the poor and fatherless (v 2, 18), crawl and cringe before the powerful of his own kind, even the covetous (v 3). As to God, he wilfully dismisses Him from his mind (v 4), or imagines Him to have forgotten or to be blind to his crimes (v 11). He uses all kinds of stratagems to catch his prey. He lurks in the villages, like a lion in his den (v 8-9). He stoops in “humility” in order to conquer the unsuspecting.

Plumer says, “There is a consanguinity between all sins ... Pride, cruelty, cunning, boasting, lust, covetousness, false peace, want of docility, practical atheism, spiritual blindness, contempt, cursing, deceit, fraud, mischief and vanity are a frightful sisterhood. The apostle James told us no new thing when he depicted (James 3:2-13) the dreadful evils of a wicked tongue (v 7). Death and life are in its power. There is no greater wickedness than that, which breaks out in words. It is amazing what mean artifices are resorted to by the best of the opposers of God’s truth and people, even by people commonly fair in other matters (v 7-8). The fawning, crouching, sycophantic part often played by the cruel and wicked can deceive none but the simple and inexperienced (v 10).”

When we are poor and fatherless, isolated and discarded, is it not wonderful to know from the Psalmist that we have a free recourse to God, the Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25)? He is ever ready to hear the cries of the oppressed and have all their grievances redressed.

THOUGHT: “What a friend we have in Jesus ... What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.”

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou heareth Thy children’s prayers.

FLEE AS A BIRD?

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccles 3:1). And so, the Preacher goes on with: “A time to be born, and a time to die ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak ...”

There is a time when one needs to flee from one's enemy, as advised by our Lord, *“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another”* (Matt 10:23). When David's life was chased by Saul's javelin the third time, which missed him but got stuck in the wall, the young courtier resolved at last to flee, and he escaped that night through a window (1 Sam 19:9-12).

However, there is also a time to stay, to stand one's ground, and this David did through many trials until he found no other way out but to exit Saul's palace. When God's time for one to leave one's station has not come, come what may, one must hold on to one's assignment. Hence the advice given to David to flee as a bird, perhaps as a partridge, to the mountains, must be rejected. The zero hour for our destruction, as planned by our enemy, may be fast approaching, but unless the Lord gives the word to leave, we must stick to the very end! With God promising us help, it is safer to go through a storm than to keep out of it without His permission. May David's perseverance in the face of grave danger strengthen us in the perilous days ahead.

It is true that the very foundations of justice are destroyed under King Saul, for example, the massacre of the eighty-five priests of Nob (1 Sam 22:18) so that those who stand for righteousness can do little under such oppression. Nevertheless, David will not lose heart. He appeals to the Judge of heaven, whose throne is His holy temple. By appealing to his Lord he knows the wicked will be brought to book. He is compensated with the knowledge that God will punish the wicked even with fire and brimstone and a holocaust. They will receive their portion of punishment in due course. The righteous will find favour because the Lord loveth righteousness.

THOUGHT: “In the Lord I must trust.”

PRAYER: To go or stay, may I always do Thy bidding.

FRIDAY, JULY 13

PSALM 12

PROVERBS 26:28; 27:14

Only one life 'twill soon be past.

FLATTERING LIPS AND LYING TONGUE

King David is surrounded by more bad people than good. The former are in his army and in his court for the sake of their own belly. They jockeyed for position and power and used every stratagem to push themselves forward.

To jostle up the social ladder, David's ambitious underlings use flatteries. They praise the king when they hate him in their heart. Their true colours are shown during the crisis of Absalom's rebellion. They are like the fox who praises the crow for his beautiful singing in order to get his chunk of meat. As they do not mean what they say, flatterers are exposed as having two hearts. In Hebrew, David says, "He has a heart and a heart." Flatterers are honey-tongued liars who bring bitterness and destruction. Solomon, surrounded by fawners and sycophants, had plenty to say about flatterers. Read Luke 6:26, a case of mutual flattering with double condemnation.

If flatterers are sweet liars, the boastful are pungent ones. While the former flatter others, the latter flatter themselves. Besieged by such perverseness, David cannot help but cry out to God for deliverance. Few are the godly and faithful by his side, but God is always a present help (Ps 46:1). As the king pronounces sentence on these perjurers, he hears the judgment that comes from above, upholding him. His rule over the kingdom is unshakeable because he has the mandate from Heaven. The Lord dispenses justice without fear or favour to one and all, relieving the poor and oppressed against the power of the high and mighty. God cannot bless a nation wherein justice can be bought at a price.

In contrast with man's dubious words which are lighter than vanity, God's Word is like sterling silver, solid and shining. God's Word is the defence of the meek and weak, though the vile and wicked prowl about them. If David needed to call out to God for help against traitors in his kingdom, how much more must we, like sheep among wolves?

THOUGHT: Confucius says, "Fine words and an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue" (Analects III).

PRAYER: Lord, help me to speak the truth always in love.

SATURDAY, JULY 14

PSALM 13

LUKE 18:1-8

I will honour the Lord in

His house tomorrow.

“O LORD JESUS, HOW LONG, HOW LONG?”

In “Christ Returneth,” there is the refrain: “O Lord Jesus, how long, how long?” This we have borrowed for the title of this Psalm.

While it is good that we refrain from murmuring, it is our opinion, in the light of Jesus’ parable of the widow and the judge (Luke 18:1-8) that David’s importunity be our stimulation to greater intensity in prayer! May we describe David’s “*how long*” prayer to be one in the super-optative mood, and our prayers often in the indicative mood. Our prayers are not directed vertically but horizontally. Applying the lesson of Jesus’ parable to our situation, He concludes, “... (God) *will avenge them speedily* ...”

In times of extreme pressure, an hour seems an age and a day an eternity. It pleased God to put David, especially in his young days, in many a trying situation, like gold in the fire, to purify him. Without the multiplied trials and temptations that he had to undergo, he would not have become the greatest king of Israel. “*A man after his own heart*” (1 Sam 13:14), he passed the tests with flying colours save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (1 Kings 15:5). David became the model for every Judean king after him. “*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*” (Lam 3:27). When you are young you must be tested the more, but do you know the way of escape? Through prayer, earnest prayer.

When we plead so strongly with the God of our salvation, will He come speedily to our rescue? In this Psalm we see Him very quickly on the scene to deliver His beloved. No sooner has David cried out to God than the answer of his deliverance from his enemies comes. This is attested in the concluding two verses. This is his constant hope experienced after a night of sorrowful pleading (Ps 30:5). Let us learn to pray with David, “*How long?*”

THOUGHT: “For His anger is only for a moment, But his mercy for ever shall endure, Though our tears flow down all the night long, Dawn breaks forth with song.”

PRAYER: Father, may I persevere in prayer, for Thou answerest prayers.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 15

PSALM 13

PSALM 42:11

*This is the day which
the Lord hath made.*

HOW LONG? HOW LONG?

Four times (in Psalm 13) cries out David to God in desperation when oppressed by his enemy! When you are confronted from every quarter in a hostile situation, look up and lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh. Let not a Christian say, "Die!"

David is the supreme leader of the Kingdom of Israel. In him lies every important decision. A leader of men is a lonely man. He may have many counsellors, but he must be the one "to press the button." How awful it is to make the final decision! Especially when David is hard pressed everywhere he goes. Unless he has his Lord, the living and true God from whom he draws encouragement, from whom he obtains strength and wisdom, yea, even deliverance, he could never have ruled Israel forty years.

It is hard to pinpoint when David wrote this Psalm. But it fittingly expresses the emotions of God's people in those ever-recurring trials which beset them. What is it that is affecting you today? Read Psalm 42:11.

The Apostle Paul gives us this assurance: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loveth us. 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*" (Rom 8:35-39).

Let us, like David, in moments of desperation call on God for salvation. And let us, upon deliverance, render due praise and thanksgiving to Him. When we praise the Lord, the devil is shamed!

THOUGHT: Trust in the Lord and don't despair, He is a friend so true!
No matter what your troubles are, Jesus will see you through!

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to cling to Thee even through calamities.

MONDAY, JULY 16

PSALM 14

ROMANS 1:21-22

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

DAVID VS ATHEISM

Though we think of the ancient world's religion as one of polytheism versus Israel's monotheism, Psalm 14 reveals an atheism lurking in monotheistic Israel all the same. The LORD, that is JEHOVAH, is mentioned in this Psalm in distinction from the universal GOD in the revised version of Psalm 53, which we title "David vs Atheism (Part 2)." Whatever a nation's religion, there is a hard core of the atheistic in each.

In this Psalm we are studying the atheistic that thrived in Israel in David's time. The ratio of the atheistic in Israel today is no less. There are the orthodox Jews, very devout, who believe the Old Testament to be God's infallible Word, but more are the modernists, the agnostics, and last but not least, the atheists. Is that not the situation also in the Christian Church today? For example, the late David Jenkins (Bishop of Durham, 1984-1994), who denied the fundamentals of the Christian Faith such as Christ's virgin birth and bodily resurrection, is worse than an atheist. To deny God's being and power is plain stupidity, according to Paul too (Rom 1:21-22).

A person who recognizes no God but himself can only produce "abominable works" (Ps 14:1). Israel's God sees this not only in Israel but in all the children of men. When the atheist is cut off vertically in his relation to God, he runs wild in his horizontal relationship with his fellowmen. "Who eat up my people as they eat bread" is a true picture of the godless strong and mighty over the weak, like big fish eating small fish. If "my people" here refers to Israel (Ps 14:4), we have the modern version of it in Hitler's killing of six million Jews by the gas chamber. But those who perpetrated such dastardly crimes are cowards themselves. Many went into hiding when God sided with the righteous (Ps 14:5).

The last and concluding verse promises salvation to come out of the God of Israel to His own people. O that our Jewish friends who are inclined to atheism will return to their God today.

THOUGHT: Psalm 14:1.

PRAYER: Lord, may Israel accept Jesus as their Messiah.

TUESDAY, JULY 17

PSALM 15

HEBREWS 12:14; DEUTERONOMY 23:20

*Only what's done
for Christ will last.*

FOLLOW PEACE WITH ALL MEN AND HOLINESS

Concerning the occasion of Psalm 15, Spurgeon says that “it is exceedingly probable that ... its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion.” Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence, for because unauthorised persons had intruded into the office, David was unable on the first occasion to complete his purpose of bringing the ark to Zion. On the second attempt he was more careful, not only to allow the work of carrying the ark to the divinely appointed Levites (1 Chron 15:2), but also to leave it in charge of the man whose house the Lord had blessed, even Obededom (1 Chron 26:8, 12). Now the matter of bringing back the ark to Jerusalem from its exile (1 Sam 7:1-2) was of such gravity that when one of its bearers, Uzza, “... *put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled*” (1 Chron 13:9), he died before the Lord. Such an act was ceremonially unclean. Only priests and Levites were appointed to carry the ark. Therefore on the second occasion, when David went to transport the ark, he followed closely the Mosaic law of employing priests and Levites (1 Chron 15:14). Now the spiritual lesson is that when one desires to dwell with God, the inward cleanliness is even more important (Heb 12:14). From Psalm 15 we are required to walk uprightly, and be forthright. Spurgeon says, “Walking is of far more importance than talking ... God’s house is a hive for workers, not a nest for drones.”

Spurgeon says of Psalm 15:4: “To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places.”

Psalm 15:5: As to usury, the high interest charged is hateful both to God and men. Usury here does not refer to Government-approved interest.

This psalm is like fire that purifies gold and a furnace for silver!

THOUGHT: “Search me, O God, and know my heart today ...”

PRAYER: Lord, make me to desire to live a holy life.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18

PSALM 16

ROMANS 10:9

*“Open thou mine eyes
that I may behold ...”*

RESURRECTION OF DAVID’S GREATER SON

“*Michtam*,” which occurs also in Psalms 56 to 60, is a term unexplained. Spurgeon calls it “the precious sonnet.”

Under some trial David declares his unwavering trust in the Lord alone. He is not like Saul who wavered, who in desperation went to consult the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28), who transgressed the very decree he had given against “*those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards*” (1 Sam 28:9). David warns against consulting another god which those weak in faith might seek after, as in the case of Saul. Often we hear of Christians who, in moments of desperation, yield to their friends’ suggestion to visit mediums and “bomohs.” The end result is disastrous.

David claims the Lord to be his inheritance, like the Levites (Deut 10:9), his cup as received by a friend from his host (Ps 23:5; 116:13). David rejoices in a goodly heritage, both physical and spiritual. But of greater treasure is the spiritual, the wisdom and understanding bestowed upon him even to his innermost being — the deep things of God.

As God revealed the secrets of life to him, he is led into the mystery of the Messiah who should conquer death by rising from the grave. (To whom would God reveal the resurrection of David’s Greater Son than to David himself, the man after God’s own heart?) This is the interpretation of Peter in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:25-31). Similarly, Paul quotes from this Psalm in his message to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:35). The great message of the Messiah’s Resurrection is “*that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 13:38), “*and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (Acts 13:39).

Have you believed in Christ who died for your sins and rose again from the dead?

THOUGHT: (Look up 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I always remember Thy death and resurrection for me.

THURSDAY, JULY 19

PSALM 17

GENESIS 18:25

“... wondrous things out of thy law.”

GOD THE APPEAL-JUDGE OF THE FALSELY ACCUSED

In David's petition, we see the godly deeply wronged by false accusers. There were many of them, miserable sycophants in the court of king Saul under whom young David served. Doeg the Edomite was chief among them (1 Sam 22:9). In such a situation, where could David find redress? He did not forget Abraham's declaration that God is “*the Judge of all the earth*” (Gen 18:25). To David, God is the Appeal-Judge of the falsely accused. He must have recourse quickly to Him. Hence his “*cry*” and prayer that “*goeth not out of feigned lips*” (Ps 17:1). Calvin says, “When we present ourselves before God in prayer, it is not to be done with the ornaments of an artificial eloquence, for the finest rhetoric and the best grace which we can have before him consists in pure simplicity.” Feigned lips are God's abhorrence. When you get into a tight spot like David, when you are left helpless with no one speaking for you, then turn to the Lord for help! But it must be for a righteous cause (Ps 17:1), or else how can God hear you? He who is right need not try to take advantage. He is subject to God's judgment and is assured of equity given from an equal balance (Ps 17:2).

A blessed privilege is prayer petition. The very rightness of his cause makes him bold in prayer.

The whole of the Divine character is approved by the righteous and is a joy to Him. David rejoiced in the Divine Omniscience (Ps 17:3), but this is terror to the wicked. The wicked love sin and evil as the lion flesh and blood. In the circumstances David finds himself in, though his enemy is like a sword, it is still controlled by God's hand. David is assured of deliverance and of seeing God face to face when he wakes up in His presence.

Rev Ting Li Mei (1871-1936), the Moody and First Revivalist of China, makes the last verse of this Psalm his farewell message to his family and friends before his death.

THOUGHT: (Review Psalm 17:15.)

PRAYER: Be it good times or bad, may I always be found at Thy Throne of grace.

FRIDAY, JULY 20

PSALM 18

2 SAMUEL 22

“The LORD is on my side ...”

THE LORD-PROTECTOR OF ALL MY LIFE

Psalm 18 is found also in 2 Samuel 22 with certain variations. It is suggested it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own deep experiences. Hence the variations. The spirit of this Psalm is reflected in the well known hymn “Now Thank We All Our God” by Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) when God brought peace at the end of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48). David was a man of war throughout his life (1 Chron 22:8). How many a time he would have been swallowed in death at the hand of his enemies. Three times Saul’s javelin was thrown at him, *“but he slipped away out of Saul’s presence, and he (Saul) smote the javelin into the wall”* (1 Sam 19:10). The story of how David fought Goliath is most well known, but there were numerous other battles that he fought, and the Lord delivered him out of them all.

As David looked back through almost seventy years of his life, from the day of his youth to the rebellion of Absalom his own son, etc., he overflowed with gratefulness to the Lord-Protector of his life. Hence Spurgeon has titled this Psalm “The Grateful Retrospect.” From his exploits, going even through the valley of the shadow death, he reminisces how the Lord had saved him, time after time. He gives glory to the God of His salvation. What a Psalm to remind us not to forget His saving acts in our lives, through many a storm and tempest, through many a path narrow.

The title of this Psalm significantly mentions David, not king of Israel, but a *“servant of the LORD.”* Yet, when David says, *“Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets,”* he is not taking private vengeance, but rather executing justice in his capacity as the anointed king of Israel. The enemies he mentions throughout this Psalm are not private ones either, but are public pests, bitter enemies against the cause of God.

THOUGHT: “Fight the good fight with all thy might, Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right; Lay hold on life and it shall be thy joy and crown eternally.”

PRAYER: May I never fear to stand for Thee and with Thee, O Lord.

SATURDAY, JULY 21

PSALM 19

PSALM 56:11

“... I will not fear ...”

FROM WORLD-BOOK TO WORD-BOOK (Spurgeon)

How can man know God? From “the great, wide, wonderful world” wherein he lives (Rom 1:20). By “natural theology,” man knows there is a God. By reading the World-book man knows that the universe, the cosmos, cannot come about but by God’s creation. This is called the “cosmological argument.” To say that the world has always been or is the result of evolution is no logical argument, but fantasy.

How do “*the heavens declare the glory of God*”? Spurgeon says, “The book of nature has three leaves: heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place. ... Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore ...”

In Psalm 19:1-6 David describes how nature speaks to our souls, in a state of pastoral seclusion. But while natural theology should teach us the existence of Almighty God as the Maker of heaven and earth, it is “revealed theology,” the Word-book, the Written Law of God that can lead us to a saving knowledge of Him as Redeemer. The Bible is within David’s discussion in Psalm 19:7-11.

Having seen God’s power in creation and learned from the Bible the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, can you say you have found God Himself? Is David’s prayer for grace in Psalm 19:12-14 also your prayer?

THOUGHT: (Review Psalm 19:14.)

PRAYER: Help me to see Thee in Thy creation and in Thy Word, O Lord.

“GOD SAVE THE KING” (1)

David who composed Psalm 20 as a prayer has set a pattern for every Christian nation that they should seek God's protection than rely on their own might. In this connection, Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional" is a devout echo to David's call to allegiance to the Divine and trust in Almighty. How anthems of Christian nations contrast sharply with those outside the pale of Christianity. The heathen nations may pray for their sovereign's longevity, or to stir up patriotism, but God is out of their vocabulary.

Insofar as the British Anthem is concerned, there is no doubt that the true religion is deeply embedded in the lyrics, but do the subjects of a royal nation sing their Anthem in sincerity and in truth? It is good to recall the words of King George VI, father of Queen Elizabeth II. When war broke out between Great Britain and Germany in September 1939, he summoned the Nation and Empire to a Day of Prayer and Humiliation before Almighty God. He said, "Let us pray not that God be on our side but rather we be on God's side." "God Save the King" and now under Queen Elizabeth II, "God Save the Queen" is quite meaningless unless the English people can sing from the depths of their heart.

David's composition of this Anthem for his people to sing as a prayer for the king's salvation and victory over his enemies in battle is for the purpose, no doubt, of bolstering the faith of future generations, though primarily it is for nation building under his rule. David, the founder of Israel, was a warring king all the days of his life.

Some commentators think this Psalm of Prayer for the King is prophetic of the Lord Jesus and the cry of the ancient Church on behalf of her King as she sees Him fighting courageously for her cause. The Church militant is seen here pleading for her Head, the Captain of her salvation, that He might prosper in battle against the evil one. Remember that Christ is not only our Prophet and Priest but also King.

THOUGHT: : (Read Isaiah 9:7.)

PRAYER: Lord, may Thou lead the government of my country.

MONDAY, JULY 23

PSALM 21

PSALM 23

*Teach me, O Lord, to
follow Thee closely this week.*

“GOD SAVE THE KING” (2)

Psalm 21 is a triumphant anthem and is appropriately placed after Psalm 20. Whereas Psalm 20 anticipates, this Psalm realises the hopes of the king's men. Though David had written of himself in the third person, no doubt it is intended for his people. Here is a second National Anthem to be sung upon victory in battle. It celebrates the glory and majesty of the conquering king, but ascribing both to God, so that the people's confidence might not rest on the arm of flesh but on the power and might of the Divine. The model king of Israel is a viceroy of God and not a despot.

David is the model king of Israel. Inasmuch as he is “*a man after his own heart*” (1 Sam 13:14), so God has “... *given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips*” (Ps 21:2). What did David ask of God? “*He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever*” (Ps 21:4). David did not govern his people merely as an earthly people. He looked beyond an earthly kingdom to one eternal. He longed for life everlasting, not merely living to a ripe old age on earth (which he did attain unto). While God gave him a long and prosperous reign of forty years (seven and six months in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem) he longed to live with God in His heavenly kingdom, to be saved in Him eternally. This is reflected in the conclusion of Psalm 23.

Do you try to build an empire for yourself on earth? Or do you aspire for life everlasting in the heavens? David's aspiration for life (and not power, position and wealth) is reflected also in his desire to build God a house (2 Sam 7:1-17). This so pleased the Lord that He blessed him with a kingdom perpetual in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Sam 7:16). If God promised him a kingdom forever, life everlasting all the more was promised him.

With God on his side, David's house “*waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*” (2 Sam 3:1). So did David triumph over all his foes within the kingdom. (Read Romans 8:31.)

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 23.)

PRAYER: May I be very courageous when I stand on Thy side, O Lord.

TUESDAY, JULY 24

PSALM 22

MATTHEW 27

“It is better to trust in the LORD ...”

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE MESSIAH

The title of Psalm 22 (“Aijeleth Shaha”) is translated “Hind of the Morning.” Spurgeon says, “Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm ...”

Under most excruciating circumstances, David’s soul overflowed with these prophetic words of groaning which most fittingly coincided with the Messiah’s groaning in His crucifixion. That David could say *“they pierced my hands and my feet”* when death by crucifixion was unknown in his time is another evidence of Divine revelation.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”) The very introduction to this Psalm was quoted by our Lord on the cross. Our Lord, having read Psalm 22 in His lifetime and seen Himself in each development of the Holy Tragedy, had uttered subconsciously in that extreme moment of suffering!

Let us, with the three Marys and John standing at the foot of the Cross, penitentially trace each N.T. fulfilment of this O.T. prophecy:

v 7-8: where Jesus is reviled is fulfilled in Matthew 27:39, 43; Mark 15:29.

v 14: describes the profuse perspiration, the heart is affected.

v 15: strength exhausted and extreme thirst (John 19:28).

v 16: the hands and feet pierced (Matt 27:35).

v 17: His modesty outraged by the starers (Matt 27:36).

v 18: (See Matthew 27:35)

O, to enter into the Holy of Holies of His sufferings! But His sufferings were for our sakes; therefore His death brought Him the victory of life regained. This saddest Psalm soon breaks forth into joy like the morning sun, chasing away the gloom of the night. The triumphant ending of this Psalm (v 24-31) is the logical conclusion to the Messiah’s saving work.

THOUGHT: “Lest I forget Gethsemane ... Lead me to Calvary.”

PRAYER: May I never forget the price Thou hast paid for me, O Lord.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25

PSALM 23

EPHESIANS 2:12

“... than to put confidence in man.”

THE PSALM OF PSALMS

Psalm 23 is the most versatile of David's Psalter. It fits all occasions because it breathes with every breath we take through every vicissitude of life. As life vibrates with every mood and emotion, so Psalm 23 reflects joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, desire. It is a psalm of life-hid-in-God. Whereas the world, of whatever religion or cultural background, is without God and has no hope (Eph 2:12), the Christian, like David, has fullness of confidence in God, like a lamb in the Shepherd's arms. This is how David felt when he penned this Psalm, recalling how God had delivered him “*out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear*” (1 Sam 17:37). Therefore, he could confidently go to battle against Goliath, knowing God would deliver him “*out of the hand of this Philistine*” (1 Sam 17:37). As he wrote this Psalm, he throbbed to the vivid memory of how God also delivered him from Saul's spear and revived his fainting spirits with Ahimelech's shewbread. Thus he could testify of his all sufficiency in God, in his every need in a perilous livelihood. Not only of God's emergency supply but also of His tender mercies leading to rest and recreation.

How does “*thy rod and thy staff*” comfort me? The shepherd invariably carries a staff or rod with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. With this staff he rules and guides the flock and defends them from their enemies.

From the rustic scene we are introduced to a palace setting. Is David speaking from his victory over Goliath and his honours conferred before the king which excited the envy of other servants? Anointing the head with oil is done as an expression of joy against putting on dust and ashes in sorrow. “Those that have this happiness must let it overflow into their poor brethren's emptier vessels” (John Trapp).

While David had many enemies, he could rest in the Lord that He, on the other hand, was attending to him with loving kindness. He had no doubt that a place in heaven was reserved for him. Is this your assurance too?

THOUGHT: (Memorise Psalm 23.)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, my great Shepherd, for watching over me.

THURSDAY, JULY 26

PSALM 24

2 SAMUEL 6

“It is better to trust in the LORD ...”

CLEAN HANDS AND PURE HEART

Psalm 24 was probably composed for bringing the Ark to Jerusalem from Obed-edom's house. The words of jubilation suit well the sacred dance of joy in which David led the congregation upon that joyous occasion. While this Psalm is complementary to Psalm 15, it also forms a trilogy with Psalms 22 and 23. In this trilogy we see a cross in Psalm 22, a crook in Psalm 23 and a crown in Psalm 24.

Spurgeon divides this Psalm into three parts. The first glorifies the true God, and sings of His universal dominion. The second describes the true Israel, who are able to commune with Him. The third pictures the ascent of the true Redeemer, who has opened heaven's gates for His elect.

In Section 1, we see that God is God of the Jews and the Gentiles too. “The meanest of men is a dweller in the world [He has made], and therefore belongs to Jehovah ... There is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond not free; but we are all one in Jesus Christ.” The fullness of the earth surely includes its harvests/wealth and God is the Possessor of all. He nourishes all.

In Section 2 we have the true Israel described. The men who are to stand in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race but by character. Jew or Gentile, they must be a cleansed people. God has made all, but He will save only a portion who are purified to dwell with Him. Clean hands and pure heart speak of holiness both outward and inward. And a saint is a man of honour, whose word is his only oath. False speaking will shut a man out of heaven. Beware of making a false declaration and slander.

Section 3 reveals to us the great representative Man, who answers to the full character laid down, who by His own right ascends the holy hill of Zion. See our Lord rising from among the little group upon Olivet and as the cloud receives Him, angels escort Him to the gates of heaven!

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 19:12.)

PRAYER: May my chief end be to glorify Thee with my life, my all.

FRIDAY, JULY 27

PSALM 25

PSALM 43

“... than to put confidence in princes.”

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS FROM DAVID'S HEART-CHAMBER

This Psalm (David's Second Penitential Psalm) was composed in David's old age for he reminisces the sins of his youth (Ps 25:7). And considering his reference to many enemies, this Psalm could have been written amidst rumours of a conspiracy against his rule, the chief plotter being his son Absalom. David, as usual, looked up to God for help. A broken and contrite heart before Him, he first looked in to examine his innermost being for purification before facing up to his foes. Moral power is the sustenance of physical power. David's heart was firmly anchored in God. “It is the mark of a true saint that his sorrows remind him of his sins, and his sorrow for sin drives him to his God” (Spurgeon).

This Psalm is the first to be composed in the pattern of an acrostic. The acrostic is based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, hence it has twenty-two verses. An acrostic Psalm can assist the memory. The Holy Spirit in inspiring a writer of the Sacred Scriptures can use the literary art or form of any language to express His thoughts. Hebrew poetical construction seems to suit His purpose, particularly the pattern set forth by David, progenitor of Hebrew poetry.

The emotional stirrings on our heart-strings are mirrored on our countenance! Can you see the expressions on David's face? Whatever be your troubles, learn this lesson from David's vocabulary: “Never say die. Say, Lord, save me!” Suicide is self-murder that lands one in hell. Two moods are discovered in this Psalm: prayer and meditation. They are seen to alternate as follows:

- A. Prayer (v 1-7), B. Meditation (v 8-10),
- A. Prayer (v 11), B. Meditation (v 12-15),
- A. Prayer (v 16-22)

By prayer and meditation, by meditation and prayer, our heart is cultured to a closer communion with God. Lights and shadows, shadows and lights.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 43:5.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I learn to constantly pray and meditate on Thy Word.

SATURDAY, JULY 28

PSALM 26

PROVERBS 28:1

O, lead me to Thy House tomorrow.

APPEAL TO PRIVY COUNCIL OF GOD

Singapore's legal system allows an accused person, when sentenced by a lower court, to appeal to a higher court. If his appeal to the highest court in the State (which is known as the Court of Appeal where three judges usually sit), fails, he can claim the ultimate step that takes him to the Privy Council in England. This is one good tradition inherited from Colonial days because the Privy Council, which was the highest Court of Appeal for all British colonies, is still available to a number of ex-colonies now become independent states. Being highly detached from local influences, they can see things clearer from afar, as the Chinese saying goes.

When a king like David comes under suspicion, he has no recourse but to appeal to the Privy Council of God. So can we in the last resort, appeal to "*the Judge of all the earth*" (Gen 18:25), by swearing in His Name (Isa 45:23). (This does not contradict our Lord who says, "*Swear not at all ...*" for here He is rebuking forswearing oneself, that is perjury.) Insofar as David is concerned, it is hard to pinpoint which event in his life implicates him here in this Psalm. In Joab's murder of Abner, David declared his innocence by calling on the Lord (2 Sam 3:28).

An innocent person takes an oath before the Judge with boldness and confidence, but a guilty person, who perjures under oath, is afraid in his heart (Eccles 9:2). David's innocence is exhibited by such words as judge me or vindicate me and examine me and prove me; try my reins and my heart. He not only can wash his hands ceremonially as further proof of his integrity, but also go before the altar of sacrifice. Not only the burnt-offering sacrifice which would be required of him, but also the thanksgiving offering was ready, because his walk before men was upright. Therefore he was confident God would save him from bloody and mischievous men, even those who used bribes to pervert godly justice. His love for God's House was one more citation of his innocence. Moral power is what every Christian leader, like King David, must cherish, and cultivate.

THOUGHT: (Read Matthew 5:48.)

PRAYER: May I always have a clear conscience, O Lord.

**"BUT DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF
IN THE LORD HIS GOD"**

Our heading above from 1 Samuel 30:6 describes David's utter loneliness, being blamed even by his closest comrades. When a Christian is hemmed in on all sides there is only one way to look for help -- upwards. What a contrast with Stoicism that moans, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" (William Ernest Henley, 1849-1903).

David, now on the run from his enemies (Ps 27:2-3), was deprived of worship in the Lord's House (Ps 27:4). He was parted from his father and mother (Ps 27:10). He was being maligned by false accusations (Ps 27:12). This Psalm may be composed during David's flight from Saul. Was it composed during his brief stay with Achish king of Gath? Or was it the overflow of his heart after he had found temporary shelter in the cave of Adullam? Or, more properly, after he had committed his father and mother to the king of Moab? Those were trying times that stretched his sinews to the limit. This Psalm, though penned in the darkest night, glows with the fugitive's hope and assurance of the daylight of salvation. Let this Psalm shed light on your pathway. Let this Psalm be a balm for your soul.

Scharansky, a Jewish human rights fighter, was imprisoned by the Soviets. He was sustained by reading a little book of Psalms (in Hebrew) which his wife had smuggled in for him. When the guard wanted to take away the little book, he held so fast to it that in the struggle for possession between warder and prisoner, he fell onto the snow hugging the little book in his arms. He told the world that it was the Psalms that had saved him from death. This Psalm may be outlined thus:

1. Self encouragement in the Lord (v 1-3)
2. Communion with the Lord (v 4-6)
3. Prayer to the Lord (v 7-12)
4. Self-encouragement in the Lord (v 13-14)

THOUGHT: Trust in the Lord and don't despair, He is a friend so true!
No matter what your troubles are, Jesus will see you through.

PRAYER: May I go always to Thy Psalms, the balm for my soul.

MONDAY, JULY 30

PSALM 28

1 PETER 5:7

“God is our refuge and strength ...”

IF YOU CRY, CRY TO THE LORD

It is no shame to cry. Jesus wept. The pent-up feelings of sorrow, of anxiety, of fear, etc., are released to our good when we cry. We cry on the shoulders of our friends and loved ones. But it is far better to cry to the Lord, like a little child sobbing in his mother’s bosom. David knows how to do this. David not only knows how to *“encourage himself in the LORD his God”* (1 Sam 30:6), but also to pour out his discouragements. He would be the first to heed Peter’s words in 1 Peter 5:7.

Psalms 28 is placed after Psalm 27 in logical appendage. Spurgeon says, “It is another of those ‘songs in the night’ of which the pen of David was so prolific. The thorn at the breast of the nightingale was said by the old naturalists to make it sing: David’s griefs made him eloquent in holy psalmody.” America has become a mediocre society in this age of affluence. It was in times of pain and suffering that she produced greatness. Read 2 Corinthians 12:10. Cry unto the Lord in sweet submission. Crying to the Lord is a form of earnest prayer. It does not belong to the charismatics, where crying is emotionally and in some cases artfully worked up. For cool as cucumber Presbyterians, when there is good cause to weep, let us weep (Matt 5:4).

On lifting up our hands as a gesture of prayer, Spurgeon comments, without prejudice, “Uplifted hands have ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward towards God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies; we lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. O that whenever we use devout gestures, we may possess contrite hearts, and so speed well with God.”

David was a man after God’s own heart because his heart was perfect. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore God listened to his prayer when he took up the holy cause of God.

THOUGHT: I must go to the mercy seat, often.

PRAYER: Forgive me, Lord, for going everywhere except to Thee.

TUESDAY, JULY 31

PSALM 29

1 KINGS 19:11-13

“... a very present help in trouble.”

ECHO TO PRAISE
“THY NAME IN EARTH AND SKY AND SEA”

Psalm 29 is David's reminder that God is the Great Creator and Governor of the whole universe. It calls on the mighty, literally, the sons of God, which refer to the angelic hosts, to give obeisance to Jehovah in doxology and worship. It gathers the church to echo to the same that the blessings of power and peace might descend from the Father upon us (Ps 29:9-11).

As all nature and the church of His redeemed children join in worship, the power of His presence is manifested by a celestial audio-visual that stretches from horizon to horizon. This is seen and felt by the Musician-Poet in the presence of a mighty storm rolling in from the Mediterranean (Ps 29:3). The full force of its power is manifested when the winds tear asunder the mighty cedars of Lebanon (Ps 29:5). The Lebanon range and Sirion, which is Mount Hermon, rising ten thousand feet, quake under its tempestuous blasts (Ps 29:6). Amidst lightning (Ps 29:7) and thunder (Ps 29:8) detonating across the wilderness of Kadesh in Northern Galilee, the deer in the frightened forests, yet under His gentle care, can still bring forth their young!

There is another scene of a storm and an earthquake described in I Kings 19:11-13.

With outer ear we cannot hear His voice in the storm nor see Him in the fire. Thus, the world goes by without heeding the voice of God speaking in nature. It is those, like David and Elijah who hear that “*still small voice*,” that can see His wonders “in earth, and sky and sea.” And when you and I respond thus, be careful to note what the Almighty is further speaking -- to you!

THOUGHT: “In all the world around me I see His loving care.”

PRAYER: I praise thee, O Creator and Governor, for the comfort of knowing that Thou art the Sovereign God, in control of all things.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 1

PSALM 30

1 CHRONICLES 21:1-30; 22:1-6

“Therefore will not we fear ...”

FROM WEEPING TO SINGING

The house dedication that David is singing about in this Psalm does not refer to the king's palace, but rather to the Temple to be built by his son Solomon. A chain of events developing from David's haughty desire to take census of all Israel led to his sore chastisement and a three-day plague that took the lives of 70,000 in Israel. When the angel of the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem, David pleaded mercy for God's people but submitted himself and his house to judgment. The angel of the Lord spoke through Gad the prophet that an altar be erected on the threshing floor of Ornan whereby he would be pardoned through burnt-offerings, offered thereon. This David did after he had bought Ornan's threshing floor for 600 shekels of gold. When David saw God's wrath appeased thereby, he perceived that the Temple he had desired to build, which he first disclosed to Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 7:1-17), was now confirmed to be over Ornan's threshing floor. For the dedication of this Temple to be built by Solomon, David wrote this Psalm and song. The pathos of the chain of events leading to the altar sacrifices on Ornan's threshing floor is reflected in this Psalm. The story of these events is recorded in 1 Chronicles 21:1-30; 22:1-6. This historical record will help you understand why weeping is mentioned in Psalm 30:5 and the grave in Psalm 30:3.

Comments Spurgeon: “When God's children prosper one way, they are generally tried another, for few of us can bear unmingled prosperity. Even the joys of hope need to be mixed with the pains of experience, and the more surely so when comfort breeds carnal security and self-confidence. Nevertheless, pardon soon followed repentance, and God's mercy was glorified. The Psalm is a song, and not a complaint. Let it be read in the light of the last days of David ...” What an admonition to us. When the Lord blesses us with increasing prosperity, let us walk the more humbly before Him!

THOUGHT: How have I responded to God's blessings in the past?

PRAYER: (Use Proverbs 30:8-9.)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 2

PSALM 31

2 SAMUEL 15

“... *though the earth be removed ...*”

DESERTED BY THE PEOPLE, FORSAKEN BY HIS RELATIVES

The above Chinese saying well describes David's plight in this Psalm where he says he is a reproach among all his enemies, “*but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me*” (Ps 31:11). Some commentators think this situation refers to David's hurried evacuation from the town of Keilah (1 Sam 23:1-13). We take the view of those who believe it is connected rather with David's running away from Absalom his son.

The coup of Absalom struck terror into his father's heart, when it was announced that David's counsellor Ahithophel went over to his side, “*and the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom*” (2 Sam 15:12). The king's men who stayed loyal to him could be numbered on the fingers. At such an hour, when the king and his little band of followers were weak and weary, there came Shimei, a member of Saul's house from the other side of the Mount of Olives, to taunt the king. Although the large-hearted David spared his head, Shimei's ignominious end under Solomon is recorded in 1 Kings 2:36-46. What a lesson to turncoats and traitors! (Read Proverbs 17:5.)

In the opening prayer to this Psalm, we see David resigned at the outset to his destiny, culminating with “*into thine hand I commit my spirit*” (Ps 31:5). David could rest assured in God his Saviour. When troubles come, do not panic. Seek help not from friends or experts, horizontally, but from the Almighty, vertically. When you realise that you are in the centre of His care, howsoever fierce the enemy might assail you, you will not be moved.

From prayer and assurance David progresses to testimony. Testimony is sweet sacrifice to God from our lips. Testimony is rendered not to show our goodness but His in delivering us. Testimony, when applied to the hearers, becomes a sermon, a word from the Lord to those similarly affected. It is given above all to glorify God. (Read Psalm 50:23.)

THOUGHT: “When I fear my faith will fail, Christ can hold me fast.”

PRAYER: O Lord, I trust Thou will take care of me.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 3

PSALM 32

ROMANS 4:6-8

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart ...”

ACQUITTED!

According to the Oxford Dictionary, to acquit means “to declare (person) not guilty (of offence).” Acquitted is the sweet Gospel sound to every accused person who is pronounced “not guilty” by the judge. What greater joy is there to you and me, when we are arrested by the Law, to be released because our sin or crime has been paid for. This is David’s exultation in his being forgiven by his Lord. This joy of being pardoned is attested by Paul in Romans 4:6-8. Reader, are your sins forgiven? Are you on your way to heaven?

“*Maschil*” indicates this is a didactic or instructive Psalm. David promises in Psalm 51 to teach transgressors the Lord’s ways, and here he does it most effectually. How can you obtain God’s favour of forgiveness? Never hedge around like Saul when he was confronted for his waywardness and disobedience. Never try to put up a defence when you know in your heart of hearts you have sinned. Follow David, the man after God’s own heart, in making immediate and open confession when convicted by the Holy Spirit. When a boil ripens the only treatment is to cut it to release the pus within. Read 1 John 1:9-2:2.

It is told of Martin Luther that one day, being asked which of all the Psalms was the best, he answered, “*Psalmi Paulini*” -- Psalms 32, 51, 130, 143. For these four Psalms teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes without the law and without works, to the man who believes! So, they are called “*Pauline Psalms*.” Thus no man can boast of his own righteousness. Before God we have no merit at all. Before God, we are guilty. What we need is His forgiveness. And we cannot obtain forgiveness but by open confession of our sins, yea, every specific sin, with a broken heart. “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” (Ps 51:17). If we still persist in our own righteousness stoically, David concludes we are no better than the horse, or worse still, the mule!

THOUGHT: Am I a mule when it comes to spiritual things?

PRAYER: May I always submit to Thy Word and obey Thee, O Lord.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4

PSALM 33

1 CHRONICLES 16:23

“I will sing unto the LORD ...”

SING PRAISES TO GOD, OUR CREATOR AND PROVIDER

This Psalm exhorts God’s people to praise Him with the help of musical instruments, such as harp and psaltery, and “an instrument of ten strings.” We are to sing “a new song” to the skillful accompaniment of such instruments, “with a loud noise.” There is definitely a ministry of music in the Church. David himself is the progenitor of psalmody and of choral singing. “A new song” reminds us to choose appropriate hymns for every occasion of worship. Music is next to theology, says Martin Luther. Tailoring our hymns to the message is of utmost importance.

Why should we praise the Lord with such zeal and devotion? Because He is a righteous God, full of goodness and truth. He is our Creator Omnipotent, “for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps 33:9). He created the heavens with all the stars and planets, even the angels among “all the host of them” (Ps 33:6). He created the seas and oceans that all the inhabitants of the earth should stand in awe of Him (Ps 33:8).

The Lord rules and overrules the thoughts and scheming of heathen nations and blesses the nation that puts her trust in God. He is not unmindful of every individual. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator, and have therefore no reason to boast in themselves. “He considereth all their works” (Ps 33:15) means He reads the secret design in their outward behaviour, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements. As Provider and Governor over all mankind, He is the one we should look up to. He is ready to help the poor and needy who fear Him and hope in His mercy (Ps 33:18). To trust in the outward power of kings and mighty men, and not to trust in Him our Provider, is fatal. Therefore, as we praise our God, we are drawn closer to put our trust in Him. That He keeps us alive in times of famine and economic depression, and protects us from all evil, should stir our hearts to praise Him forever more.

THOUGHT: Do I give thanks before my three meals? Do I praise God for a safe flight home from business or from pleasure? Do I honour the Lord with my substance when He has increased my earnings?

PRAYER: May I praise Thee more, O Lord, for there is so much to praise.

AS ONE SNATCHED FROM THE TIGER'S MOUTH

The background of this Psalm is found in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. Continuing his flight from Saul after obtaining Goliath's sword from the priest at Nob, David found shelter with Achish, king of Gath. In the title of this Psalm "Abimelech" is used for "Achish" because "Abimelech" was a dynastic name for Philistine kings (Gen 20; 21:22-34), as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Caesar to the Roman emperors. No sooner had David entered the city of Gath than it was reported to him that the officers of the Philistine king were hostile to his coming. Out of the frying pan into the fire! To rescue himself from "the tiger's mouth" (to borrow a Chinese saying), David feigned madness. He was unceremoniously expelled, for the king chided his officers in 1 Samuel 21:14-15.

Comments Spurgeon: "Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memorials. God deserves our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first."

THOUGHT: (Meditate on Psalm 33:8.)

PRAYER: May I see Thy hand in every area of my life, and may I be thankful.

MONDAY, AUGUST 6

PSALM 35

1 SAMUEL 24:9-15

*“He that hateth me hateth
my Father also.”*

GOD IS MY AVENGER

The historical setting of this Psalm is probably found in 1 Samuel 24:9-15. While hunting for David in the wilderness of Engedi, Saul unwittingly strayed into David's cave to ease himself when he had a piece of his skirt cut off. It was here that David confronted Saul in his insatiable vindictiveness by his restraint to retaliate. He appealed to God for judgment (1 Sam 24:12). This magnanimity on David's part toward his arch-enemy is another virtue that earned him the title *“a man after his own heart”* (1 Sam 13:14). Read what Paul said in Romans 12:19 in regard to our enemies.

With this episode stirring his heart, David called upon God to plead his cause *“with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me”* (Ps 35:1). David was pleading for *“an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,”* not from a Pharisaical spirit for that Shylockian pound of flesh, but for what in our modern age is called *“human rights,”* in that he was falsely accused (Ps 35:11) and unjustifiably persecuted (Ps 35:7). In contrast, David had done to Saul and other of his enemies nothing but good (Ps 35:12). Therefore when his enemies had rewarded him evil for good, he had no recourse but to appeal to his God.

David is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that Psalm 35:19 is quoted in John 15:25 to show how our Saviour's enemies have also persecuted Him. And this word is extended to us who are on David's and our Lord's side, *“The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you ... He that hateth me hateth my Father also”* (John 15:20-23).

In the judgment to come, David sees them *“brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt”* (Ps 35:26). But *“let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.”* Right is might when God is my Avenger.

THOUGHT: Love your enemies.

PRAYER: Lord, may I love the way Thou lovest.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 7

PSALM 36

MICAH 2:1

Man is totally depraved.

MAN'S PRAVITY VERSUS GOD'S MAGNANIMITY

David, in this Psalm's title, signs himself as *"the servant of the LORD."* He glories in his servanthood also in Psalm 18 and 116:16. And this Psalm is given to the charge of the Chief Musician to be sung in the Temple services. It seems to be David's study of man's pravity and God's magnanimity.

1. Man's pravity (Ps 36:1- 4) is sunken to the lowest when he puts himself on such a high pedestal as to defy God. He praises not his Creator but his puny self. He is thoroughly corrupted from doing good and stupefied in his profanity and hypocrisy. He is the atheist of Psalm 14:1 and 53:1. Matthew Henry comments on Psalm 36:4: "It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits on work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management, with the subtlety, as well as the malice, of the old serpent, to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his Word (Mic 2:1)."

2. The magnanimity of God (Ps 36:5-6) consists of His mercy and faithfulness that are high as the heavens, His righteousness and judgments great as the mountains and deep as the sea. This is a picture of His common grace to His creatures, both *"man and beast"* (Ps 36:6).

The magnanimity of God in His special grace *"unto them that know thee"* is given in Psalm 36:7-10, which culminates with *"thy righteousness to the upright in heart"* (Ps 36:10). God's magnanimity leads His children to *"put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."* Other metaphors of God's magnanimity to His children are *"house, river, fountain, light"* (Ps 36:8-9). God takes special care of His children. Wherever we go He is with us.

This Psalm concludes with a prayer for deliverance from the wicked. So, we are taught to seek God Almighty and to refrain from temptation and be delivered from evil. Man's pravity versus God's magnanimity!

THOUGHT: What are my first thoughts when I awake every morning?

PRAYER: Lord, I praise and thank Thee for Thy great magnanimity.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8

PSALM 37

PROVERBS 19:17

“Fret not ...”

NOT MIGHT IS RIGHT, BUT RIGHT IS MIGHT

There is a paradox in the affairs of men, and that is that the wicked and lawless seem to prosper, but the good and law-abiding suffer. So, those who are godly, who come under the oppression of the wicked, tend to complain and “*fret*,” or even become envious of the success of their opponents.

Writing from an old age (Ps 37:25), David discovers time to be the best judge. From the wealth of his experiences through seventy years of life, he has seen how the wicked might spread his power like a green bay tree (Ps 37:35), but when he dies his influence is finished overnight.

The righteous may suffer affliction, the very victims of the wicked. But the Lord turns the tables upon the bullies themselves (Ps 37:15).

In the economic world the wicked practise cheating. They are plotters, schemers, whose aim in life is to enrich themselves at the expense of others. In legal terms they commit criminal breach of trust.

Knowing God to be their Provider, Sustainer and Judge, the righteous live a frugal life. Whatever they have to spare they are willing to share with others, especially the needy, by giving or lending (Ps 37:21, 26). They, who live unto God and with regard to their fellowmen, will receive a good reward, even on earth. While heaven is the ultimate goal of a godly life, there are the blessings of earth that God lavishes on the meek (Matt 5:5).

In order to keep the godly straight in this path of righteousness, David gives them eight precepts. A precept is a command, so it is given in the imperative mood, as in the opening sentence of this Psalm: “*Fret not ...*” “*Trust in the LORD ...*” (Ps 37:3) is the second precept. Can you find the rest of the precepts? Obeying these precepts keeps one not only on a straight path but leads the same to prosperity. Thus it is recorded of David the Psalmist himself that his house “*waxed stronger and stronger*” (2 Sam 3:1).

THOUGHT: Do I “fret”? Why?

PRAYER: “Thy way, not mine, O Lord.” (Horatius Bonar)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9

PSALM 38

MATTHEW 5:11-12

Pass me not,

O Gentle Saviour!

“SAVIOUR, SAVIOUR, HEAR MY HUMBLE CRY”

Let this first line of the refrain to Fanny J. Crosby’s (1820-1915) “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour” serve for a more vivid title to Psalm 38. “Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry” surely reflects David’s aching heart.

This Psalm cannot be traced to any particular incident in David’s life. It could be an urgent appeal for relief from some serious sickness, which was at times regarded by David as a rebuke from God. Sickness, according to Romans 8:28, is for our good, to bring us round to Him when perhaps we are beginning to stray away. This Psalm is suggested by some commentator to have been composed for the edification of sick and slandered saints, without special reference to David himself.

David’s misery in sickness is aggravated by the turning away of his friends and relatives (Ps 38:11). His sickness further becomes an occasion for his enemies to do him harm. Alas for us when, in addition to griefs inside, we are assailed by maligners outside. In Psalm 41:5 David is more explicit, *“Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?”* As to the *“... lovers and ... friends ...”* (Ps 38:11) that stand aloof from his sore, they come under the category of him whose words were *“smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords”* (Ps 55:21).

At such a time as this, “a sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy.” To be deaf and dumb in the face of an enemy’s verbal assaults is a testimony of moral strength. It is good even to be blind to their visible menace. *“Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD’S servant?”* (Isa 42:19). So, when we are laid low, let us all the more look up to Him. Remember also: The just shall suffer persecutions, but *“vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Rom 12:19).

THOUGHT: “Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry! While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.” (Fanny J. Crosby)

PRAYER: May Thou turn every unjust accusation into a blessing.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10

PSALM 39

PROVERBS 25:11

All is vanity!

SICKNESS SHOWS UP THE VANITY OF LIFE AND MONEY

In Psalm 39, David was bowed down with sickness and sorrow (Ps 39:10). He seems to be plagued by unholy thoughts from a murmuring heart, but clamps them down lest evil should escape out of his mouth. And his enemy would pounce upon it and find cause for mischief. The higher a man goes in life (David is king), the more enemies he makes. In keeping a bridle on his tongue, he goes to the other extreme of not saying anything good. Not even a word of “Praise the Lord” to God or a word of “Well done” to those who loyally serve him. While flattery is a deadly sin to be avoided, commendation by a leader of men serving loyally under him is needed to inspire devotion.

When David can hold down the friction of his inward thoughts no more, he bursts into this Psalm. Spurgeon comments, “Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour it out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath.” This is like letting off steam from a safety valve. While David has many grouses against his enemies, sickness helps him vent his soul to God.

Rather than lodge a just complaint against an enemy immediately facing him, David asks God to teach him the vanity of life and money. He compares his life span to an handbreadth, the smallest unit of ancient measurement, and the glory of a lifetime’s achievement to vanity. As to his money and property, these are accumulated for others when he leaves this earth. This truth is hard for us to swallow!

Therefore God is the ultimate aspiration of the godly in life or death. Even now David’s hope is in Him who is the One who can relieve him from his sufferings. He counts himself no better than his fellows, and closes with a prayer pleading for recovery from his sickness. Sickness is God’s messenger to show us the vanity of life and money.

THOUGHT: “More love to Thee, O Christ, More love to Thee!”

PRAYER: “Let sorrow do its work, Send grief and pain,” O Lord.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11

PSALM 40

HEBREWS 10:5-9

“... he hath made him
to be sin for us ...”

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

David's description of the ordeal that he went through as “*an horrible pit*” and “*the miry clay*” brings to mind one who is caught in a quagmire. Now, we know that one fallen into such a situation is totally helpless. Patience and more patience is needed until outside help comes. That outside help, to David, is God. In response to his cry to God his only Help, he is pulled out of the quicksand to stand on a rock. A similar situation is described by Isaiah of Judah's predicament in the face of an Assyrian invasion. Isaiah says, “*For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still*” (Isa 30:7). Their deliverance is from God. What a lesson to us today who are caught in such a treacherous situation. Let go, and let God!

David is careful not to forget God in sacrifice as an expression of thanksgiving. As Samuel has taught that obedience is better than sacrifice, David here offers up his ears and his heart to do God's will, yea, to treasure God's law in his innermost being. Hebrews 10:5-9 quotes David's holy desire to serve the Lord as applicable to our Lord's desire to do His Father's will, yea, even to the extent of presenting His body a sacrifice, without which all the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament would be useless. “*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*” (2 Cor 5:21).

David goes beyond testifying of God's deliverance. Now he declares he must preach it “in the great congregation” (Ps 40:9), yea, even to all of God's people. He is ever more grateful because he realises his unworthiness in the light of his multiple sins. Are we any better than David? What have we done to show our gratitude to God?

THOUGHT: When was the last time I showed God my gratitude?

PRAYER: Lord, make me ever grateful by presenting my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Thee.

"CHARITY BRINGS SHOWERS OF BENIGNITY"

Read Proverbs 19:17, Solomon's restatement of the opening verse of Psalm 41. When a man is tender-hearted to the needy, God will help him when he in turn is in want. David speaks from experience. When Saul massacred the eighty-five priests of Nob, there was only one Abiathar who escaped. When Abiathar sought shelter with David, he welcomed him warmly (1 Sam 22:23). When Absalom rebelled against his father David, it was Abiathar's son, Jonathan, and another, who relayed Absalom's plot to the king. One good turn deserves another, but it is God who is David's Deliverer in time of trouble.

David is disabled not only by rebellion, but also by sickness. And he is not slow to search his own soul. He confesses his sin to God, that he might be cleansed. Unless one is right with God and man, one cannot stand in a day of trial and judgment. Self-examination is a good spiritual exercise.

God defends David against traitors in his own kingdom. Psalm 41:9 might refer to his chief counsellor Ahithophel. Treachery is an "hateful crime, which, as we commonly say, can never be expiated, and from which there is no possibility of escape" (Calvin). Never sell your leader!

When David prays for recovery from sickness that he might deal with the traitors (Ps 41:10), he "was not as one of the common people, but a king appointed by God, and invested with authority ... It is not from an impulse of the flesh, but in virtue of the nature of his office, that he is led to denounce against his enemies the punishment which they had merited" (Calvin). But God's justice is swifter than a human sovereign's. Ahithophel was speedily dispatched by his own hands. (Read Psalm 7:11, 16.)

In all his trials David ended triumphant over all his enemies. His throne is established forever because of his integrity he is upheld by God. Thus he is ever eloquent to give praise to his God and Saviour.

THOUGHT: Have I ever sold my leader?

PRAYER: Help me to be a loyal servant to Thee, like King David.

MONDAY, AUGUST 13

PSALM 42

PSALM 84:10-12

*Our souls are restless
till they find rest in God.*

WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?

“Maschil”: This is an instructive Psalm. *“For the sons of Korah”*: Were they the surviving descendants of that miserable man who, together with two hundred and fifty of his adherents, perished, when *“the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah”*? Korah was the ringleader of the two hundred and fifty *“men of renown”* against Moses’ leadership soon after they were sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness.

But in Numbers 26:11 we read, *“Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.”* These had taken the warning of Moses of impending judgment, and had fled from their rebellious father. So should we heed God’s warning and flee from the wrath to come. These sons of Korah were spared by the unsearchable grace of God. In the days of David the sons of Korah were chosen to sing in the choir. This Psalm, most probably penned by David, was given them to sing.

The circumstances under which the Psalmist wrote were his exile for a considerable period from the House of God. If it was David who wrote, it is thought these circumstances refer to his days as a fugitive, running from the spear of Saul. The Psalmist loves God and worships in His House but is now separated from it at a distance and for a time. We do not appreciate the freedom of worship today until we come under persecution and perhaps have to go underground to the house-churches as in China.

In such circumstances do our souls pant for God, like the hart for the cooling streams? If we thirst for God we will drink of the water of life. There is a bitter-sweetness in affliction. Our only way out is God! As the lugubrious thoughts keep chasing through the Psalmist’s mind, as we witness their refrain in this Psalm (vv 5 and 11), he does not give up, for in his God there is hope.

THOUGHT: Do I ever “pant” for God? Why?

PRAYER: Forgive me, Father, when I have lost hope in Thee. May I ever look to Thee and ever hope in Thee.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14

PSALM 43

PSALM 118:5-7

“... *David encouraged himself
in the LORD his God.*”

O SEND OUT THY LIGHT AND THY TRUTH

On account of the similarity of the structure of this Psalm to that of Psalm 42, it has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song. We agree rather with Matthew Henry who says this Psalm was penned upon the same occasion as the former, and having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it.

It is observed that Psalm 43:2 is almost the same as Psalm 42:9 while Psalm 43:5 is exactly the same as Psalm 42:11. It is further observed that when Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the third time, He prayed “*saying the same words*” (Matt 26:44). Using two verses of Psalm 42, the author of Psalm 43, in the same mood as he composed the previous Psalm, seeks his God from another angle. The mood he is in writing Psalm 43, as in Psalm 42, is that he is depressed in spirit because of persecution from his enemy. But as a Christian will never say die, he pulls himself up to seek his God, who is his strength and the health of his countenance (Ps 43:5).

In Psalm 43:1, the author appeals to God not only as his Judge (“*judge me*”), but also as his Advocate (“*plead my cause*”) and as his Deliverer (“*O deliver me*”). He is let down by “*an ungodly nation*” (Israel apostatising) and betrayed by “*the deceitful and unjust man*” (is it Saul, or Absalom his son?). These are the trials of leadership, and David has triumphed over his treacherous subordinates often by encouraging himself in the Lord his God (1 Sam 30:6).

The author, in his communion with God, desires most to worship in His Tabernacle on His holy hill, at His altar, praising Him with voice and harp, where he will see His light and truth.

When you are cast down in spirit, all the more you should go to Church!

THOUGHT: (Apply Psalm 118:5-7 to your own self.)

PRAYER: May I always see Thee, Father, as the strength and health of my countenance.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15

PSALM 44

JOB 1

“... the LORD gave,
and the LORD hath taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD.”

“THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST IN HIM”

Psalm 44 is easily divided into (I) Israel's past victories under God (vv 1-3); (II) Israel's trust in God in the present (vv 4-8); (III) Israel's seeming abandonment by God (vv 9-16); (IV) Israel's trust in God reaffirmed (vv 17-22); (V) Israel's supplication to God renewed (vv 23-26). The words of Job which we have borrowed for the title of this Psalm are appropriate, for the sentiments of the Psalmist amidst Israel's sufferings are akin to Job's.

The Psalmist here remembers how Israel's past victories over the Canaan tribes were wrought not by their own prowess but by the power of God. *“In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever”* (Ps 44:8). In the same vein must we ascribe to God our past achievements, yea, even the good inheritance from our fathers who first became Christians. Whatever we have today comes from His Hand.

Now, Israel, instead of conquering, is being conquered! They turn back in battle (Ps 44:10), they are scattered like sheep among the heathen (Ps 44:11). They are sold into slavery for a song, so they are derided by their neighbours. They are a shame to themselves in the face of those who blaspheme God. Now all these things that have occurred to Israel, as we trace to the roots of the matter, come by God's permissive will. God uses the hands of enemies to chastise His people. As the sin of Israel is not mentioned, these circumstances may be seen in the light of Romans 8:28. God allowed Satan to chastise Job, not for his particular sins, but for proving his integrity. Not all troubles and calamities that befall us are on account of our sin, but for God's higher purpose. When our sky is dark with clouds, look at the silver lining and the sun behind with eyes of implicit faith. The devout will say, *“All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant”* (Ps 44:17). Israel *“for thy sake are ... killed all the day long ...”* (Ps 44:22) attests to a godly generation under persecution. How these verses describe the true and faithful of the house churches in China under Mao's Cultural Revolution.

THOUGHT: I must not lose faith in God under any circumstances.

PRAYER: (Use Job 1:21.)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16

PSALM 45

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30

“... forget also thine own people,
and thy father's house.”

ROYAL WEDDING SONG

This Psalm to the “*chief Musician*” is for “*the sons of Korah,*” a choir appointed by David to sing in the Temple service. “*Maschil*” refers to “*instruction in godliness.*” If this Psalm is composed for the Ideal King, then it should be offered to David’s Greater Son, King Jesus (according to Spurgeon). For this is a King particularly blessed of God (Ps 45:2), a King who rules in truth, meekness and righteousness (Ps 45:4). Indeed Hebrews 1:8-9 applies Psalm 45:6-7 to the Son, the Heavenly Bridegroom who should come to woo us, the Earthly Bride, that we might live with Him in heaven. The Bride, being a foreign princess (Ps 45:10) who is admonished to “*forget also thine own people, and thy father's house*” is all the more symbolic of our unworthiness, for salvation is offered first to the Jews.

The King’s offensive weapons, like the sword and the arrows, are spiritual, even as His Word is called “*the sword of the Spirit*” (Eph 6:17). His arrows are arrows of conviction, for under rebuke and chastisement, David says, “*thine arrows stick fast in me*” (Ps 38:1-2). The myrrh, aloes and cassia, fragrant spices from desert plants that permeate the Royal Wedding garment, bespeaks the sweetness of our Lord so that all regenerated spirits rejoice in Him, for He is made of God unto us, “*wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30).

The Royal Bride who represents the Church is attended by princesses, which adds to the grandeur of the Wedding. Nations of the world are represented inasmuch as the Gospel is to the whole world. The Royal Bridal Procession attended to by virgin bridesmaids (cf. Matt 25:1) accentuates the purity of the wedding.

“*Instead of thy fathers*” (Ps 45:16): The King would be more pleased with spiritual children to be born who, as princes, will rule the earth. Heading these must be the Apostles. Read Matthew 19:28 for Christ’s promise.

THOUGHT: Where in Matthew’s Gospel is the parable of a Royal Wedding Feast mentioned? Will I be there?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for choosing me, unworthy as I am.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 17

PSALM 46

PROVERBS 1:27-28

*“Give unto the LORD the glory
due unto his name ...”*

LUTHER’S FORTRESS PSALM

This Psalm instructs us to find shelter and protection in God, our instant help, should disaster come suddenly upon us. This reminder is much needed when we are living in peace and prosperity, and we seem to have lost touch with Him. Those who seldom pray may not know how or what to pray when calamity strikes. Read what Solomon says in Proverbs 1:27-28.

The Psalmist, perhaps from experience, mentions first of all the natural disasters (earthquake, tidal wave, flood, storm and tempest). There was the earthquake in the time of King Uzziah recorded in Amos 1:1. Surely every Israelite knew of the Flood of Noah and more vividly the crossing of the Red Sea. They lived in a land affected also by thunder and tempests (Ps 29). Have you experienced flood or typhoon or other forms of natural disasters?

The Psalmist then reminds us of the ravages of war, which had raged across the land of Israel from generation to generation. Those of us who had gone through the terrors of World War II know vividly what war is like. How the atrocities of war are prolonged by a see-saw battle of human wickedness and vengeance! It is God who can bring a war to an end, so that when armistice is arrived at by warring nations, God is to be acknowledged the Divine Arbitrator. The United Nations is totally helpless to bring warring nations or even warring factions in a nation to the Peace Conference Table.

What occurs in the physical realms takes place also in the religious. Martin Luther found shelter in this Psalm. He says, “We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin.” Luther would call Melancthon to sing the hymn he composed out of Psalm 46: If God is our refuge and fortress, the river is the Son of God, the fountain of salvation.

THOUGHT: (Read Zechariah 13:1.)

PRAYER: May I truly appreciate Thy power over all, O Lord!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 18

PSALM 47

PSALM 122

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ...”

WORSHIP THE KING WITH LOUD PRAISES

Whether this Psalm was written for the removal of the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem, or for some other auspicious occasion, it is hard to determine. Some think it is a link between Psalm 46 and Psalm 48.

Now, while in Psalm 46 we see God is the supreme ruler over the earth in troublous times, in this Psalm we see Him King over all the earth in peaceful times. God is a terrible God because He, being Ruler of the whole world and over all nations, is most awe-inspiring. So the kings of the earth, or *“princes of the people,”* must gather about His throne to give obeisance, and no less the descendants of Abraham. His Majesty is not only to be feared but also to be worshipped with joyous expressions of hand clapping and with loud voices.

This Psalm is therefore suitable for responsive reading in the Church coupled with singing on National Day or on a sovereign's birthday. While the world celebrates to commemorate the founding of a nation or to seek peace and prosperity for a ruler, the Church should look beyond to exalt her King. Since God is Ruler Supreme over the earth at all times, this Psalm is fitting for worship on any Lord's Day. Worship loses its power and benediction from Above when we children of dust below neglect to exalt His Name with zeal and devotion. This Psalm, when we sing with fervour from the heart, brings grace and glory in the Church.

It also teaches that the Israelite nation will have a special place among the nations (Ps 47:4). There is no doubt that what God gave Abraham is perpetuated to his descendants. The regathering of Israel back to their land after two thousand years in exile and their firm establishment proves the invincibility of God's promises. And God will defend what He has decreed (Ps 47:9). The hatred of Israel's Arab neighbours and the uprisings within Israel itself shall not succeed in the light of this Psalm, though the Jews today must suffer much until Jesus their Messiah returns.

THOUGHT: Why should I be interested in what goes on in Israel?

PRAYER: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 19

PSALM 48

ISAIAH 37:33-38

*“... the angel of the LORD went forth,
and smote in the camp of the Assyrians ...”*

ZION, THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF GOD

Zion is another name for Jerusalem. It is where David's palace is located. As this is where the king lives, it is the capital city. As the Temple is built here, it is God's House (Ps 48:9), so Jerusalem is the holiest and most beautiful. Yea, God is in the midst of the City. It is the hope of the exiles in every age. So when the exiles take leave of one another, they would say, "Next year in Jerusalem!" Today the Israelis have retaken Jerusalem, even the Zion City of David their king. They will never relinquish it at any cost.

Mount Zion is the joy of the whole earth; yea, Jerusalem is the world's star, from which has shone the light from heaven, even from the oracles of her prophets. Physically, Jerusalem excels all other cities in Israel by virtue of her location. As one drives up from the coast today, from Tel Aviv, one sees Jerusalem perched 2,600 feet above the sea on the mountain ridges, climbing higher and higher as one advances.

As it is the City where God dwells, foreign armies coming to invade it (before its destruction because of apostasy in Nebuchadnezzar's time) withdrew of their own accord (Ps 48:5). The following verse (Ps 48:6) surely was fulfilled in the rout of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, whereby in one night 185,000 of his troops were slain by the angel of the Lord (Isa 37:36-37). Now, Zion is beautiful and honourable not merely because it is the city of Israelite and Judean kings, but because the Great King (Ps 48:2), even God the Lord Omnipotentate, is there ruling over the earthly monarchs. God who rules not by might but rather by Right, with lovingkindness (Ps 48:9), with righteousness (Ps 48:10), with judgment (Ps 48:11). He is the God of the godly and their Guide even to death (Ps 48:14).

THOUGHT: Every nation or city that rules justly and righteously patterned after Jerusalem or Zion is bound to prosper. When an evil government reigns, even Jerusalem herself could not stand, so it was destroyed in 586 B.C. Jerusalem is revived today for the sake of the coming of the Lord, in the Great Day, to rule this earth in peace in a golden Millennium. Am I a citizen of Zion, of the Heavenly Jerusalem?
PRAYER: Lord, Thou art my Guide all through life, and through death.

MONDAY, AUGUST 20
PSALM 49
LUKE 12:16-21

*“For what shall it profit a man,
if he shall gain the whole world,
and lose his own soul?”*

SONG OF THE RICH FOOL

Whereas the Preacher sees through life’s vanity lived “under the sun,” the rich fool in Psalm 49 goes to the grave, like sheep (to the slaughter), his money and face perishing together with him (Ps 49:17). This Psalm fits perfectly the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. Is a wealthy Christian who spends with not a thought for God a rich fool?

The millionaire sees his silver dollar as a bullock cart wheel. As his value of life is the mighty dollar, he sets his hope entirely on earth. In the words of John Calvin, every mortal man thinks he is going to live on earth forever. So he builds houses that will last for generations to come and perpetuates his name in his properties (Ps 49:11). For example, a philanthropist will give thousands, even millions, on condition that institutions endowed by him are named after him. From money he goes for fame (Ps 49:16). And as long as he goes along with the world, he will receive their applause (Ps 49:18). As a tycoon he overawes the man in the street (Ps 49:16).

The Psalmist points out that the rich and mighty are no better than the poor and lowly (Ps 49:2) because they all face a common foe: death. All the world’s money cannot prolong a man’s life one second after his appointed time. A rich man’s money can neither save his brother, “*nor give to God a ransom for him*” (Ps 49:7). When death comes, it levels all to one classless society. Rich or poor, they lie at the same level, “six feet under the ground.”

Wisdom and understanding (Ps 49:3) will heed this question in Mark 8:36. A rich man without life everlasting is consumed by death, not only physically but spiritually. (The rich man woke up in hell.) A wise man (even poor Lazarus) seeks God in this life first, so that when he dies, his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave (Ps 49:15). Therefore in the days of evil, danger or death, when he is surrounded by every kind of wickedness, he is not afraid. A Christian is not afraid of death (Ps 49:5).

THOUGHT: What is my aim? Money or life?

PRAYER: Lord, may I value what, according to Thy Word, is important.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 21

PSALM 50

ISAIAH 1:18

*“And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”*

WHEN GOD EXAMINES EVERY CHURCH-GOER

This Psalm is the first of twelve ascribed to Asaph. He most probably is the one (according to 2 Chronicles 29:30) placed side by side with David as a psalmist. Asaph was one of David's three choir leaders (1 Chron 25:1).

This Psalm is easily divided into three parts. (I) The Lord comes to judge the earth (vv 1- 6). (II) He comes to examine His own people who sacrifice to Him (vv 7-15). (III) He exposes the hypocritical worshippers by showing up their wicked deeds (vv 16-21). He concludes with a threat to them that forget Him and with a benediction to the obedient.

In this Psalm God comes to judge His people in the Old Testament and the same judgment must be applied to us (2 Cor 5:10).

First, He would like to see whether we fear Him by keeping our vows and love Him with sincere thanksgiving. Not the outward form of bringing sacrifices of slain oxen and sheep in plenty. Actually God owns all (Ps 50:10). We might give our houses or lands, hundreds and thousands of dollars to the Lord. But, is our motive to glorify God or self? Let us examine our hearts each time we give to God whether our gift is acceptable.

Surely it is not acceptable, as the examination goes on, to find the worshippers not only not right with God but also not right with their brethren. These who come to Church to criticise sermons (Ps 50:17), who despise God's Word. These who are abettors of thieves, who join with those who cheat and defraud in their business dealings. These who go secretly to places of sin with their friends. These who lie and speak to deceive. These who practise character assassination against Church and family members. These who lower God's level of holiness and purity to that of their own. These who forget God, *“who honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me”* (Matt 15:8), are to be torn to pieces (Ps 50:22). But those who worship God in sincerity and in truth are accepted (Ps 50:23).

THOUGHT: How I worship God determines how He judges me.

PRAYER: Father, may I always worship Thee in sincerity and in truth.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22

PSALM 51

2 SAMUEL 12:1-13

“... *Thou art the man ...*”

“THOU ART THE MAN!”

David, the “*man after his (God’s) own heart*” (1 Sam 13:14), had fallen into sin with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite. What doubly aggravates the adultery was that, in order to cover up his sin, David sent this loyal officer to the war-front to be killed. Floating with Bathsheba on a rosy cloud of sensuality, David was oblivious to the scarlet nakedness of his crime. John Calvin says that while all with objectivity condemn adultery, one who is involved in it will approve of it. It was after Nathan the prophet had brought the king to his senses by catching him unawares with the parable of the rich man eating his poor neighbour’s ewe lamb that David was led to sentence himself! But, while David had fallen so deeply into sin, what won back God’s mercy and favour was his childlike docility. When the prophet declared, “*Thou art the man,*” he did not react like the bad kings after him did by throwing the prophet into prison, or stoning him. He fell immediately before God to plead for mercy. Are we as childlike?

Spurgeon says, “The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power, no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did. ... He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologise for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they reflect that the licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon (don’t forget!) the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.”

This Psalm divides into two parts: The first twelve verses tell of the penitent’s confession and plea for pardon. The last seven verses tell of his gratitude in anticipation and the way he resolves to show it.

THOUGHT: What must I do when I have sinned against God?

PRAYER: Father, may I be very sensitive to the sins in my life.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 23

PSALM 52

1 SAMUEL 21:1-9; 22:7-23

“... *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.*”

TALE-BEARING IS A COWARD'S UNDERCOVER SLAYING

Doeg's tale-bearing to Saul resulted in his slaying of Ahimelech and his house, eighty-five priests in the city of Nob. The circumstance leading to this ignominious tragedy was David's fleeing in great haste from Saul to Nob. As he and his young followers fled from Saul empty-handed, Ahimelech gave him shewbread which was taken out of the "temple." Though it was not lawful for "lay people" to eat this sacred bread, the need to satisfy their hunger, according to our Lord, permitted this (Mark 2:25-26). The law of necessity overrides the law of ceremony. As David was unarmed, Ahimelech gave him Goliath's sword. Now, one man who saw all this was Doeg, an Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd.

When Saul charged his officers with conspiracy in David's escape, Doeg disclosed what had transpired at Nob. His tale-bearing led to the merciless execution. Only one son of Ahimelech, Abiathar, escaped to David to tell the story. Read what David said to Abiathar in 1 Samuel 22:22-23. The tongue, according to James 3:8, is "*an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*" Though by it we bless God, by it we also curse men, who are "*made after the similitude of God*" (James 3:9). In the church, leaders are often maligned by careless lips. Read Paul's admonishment in 1 Timothy 5:19.

David sees in Doeg's tale-bearing a reckless spirit independent of God, a spirit of reliance on one's wealth and prowess (Ps 52:7). Tale-bearing stems also from a boastful craftiness (Ps 52: 1). The tale-bearer's tongue is likened to a razor blade that can be used treacherously (Ps 52:2). Tale-bearing which springs from an evil heart is tantamount to lying (Ps 52:3). Tale-bearing uses devouring words, which are like an arrow released from the bow of a deceitful tongue (Ps 52:4). While it can bring destruction, it must be appropriately avenged by God the Judge of all men (Ps 52:5). The righteous will be awed by what will be meted by God to the talebearer and "*laugh at him*" (Ps 52:6). "He who laughs last laughs best." While the tale-bearer will be punished, the righteous stands forever.

THOUGHT: How can I tame my tongue?

PRAYER: Father, forgive my unruly tongue.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 24

PSALM 53

2 KINGS 7:6-7

“... *the righteous are bold as a lion.*”

DAVID VERSUS ATHEISM

This Psalm is a duplicate of Psalm 14 with the substituting of the Hebrew name JEHOVAH by the universal GOD, so that the message here is rather directed to atheists outside Israel. Whether the situation be atheism in a polytheistic culture as in ancient days or atheism in a hedonistic culture in our days, the heart-condition of such a person is the same.

As you read over Psalm 14, you would have noticed that atheism is denounced as unadulterated foolishness. And what are the consequences of the thinking and acts of an atheist when he comes to power? We see here that those who have no fear of God have no regard for their fellowmen.

Apart from the revision in the name of God in Psalm 53, we notice that the title is enlarged with “*upon Mahalath,*” meaning suffering, indicating that this Psalm is to be used in a time of affliction when the godless mock.

Psalm 53:5 is where we find that the greatest difference occurs between Psalm 14:5-6 and Psalm 53:5, though the basic thought is the same. God overwhelms the godless with fear where there is nothing to fear. God uses psychological warfare many times to defeat Israel’s enemies. Read 2 Kings 7:6-7.

Conversely, where the Lord comes to save His people, “*Their strength is to sit still*” (Isa 30:7). “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*” (Isa 26:3). By way of contrast, Solomon says, “*The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion*” (Prov 28:1).

Finally, God turns the ground that the godless have taken in battle into their cemetery. For example, God sent an angel against the invading Assyrians and in one night slew 185,000 of the enemy. “... *behold, they were all dead corpses*” (Isa 37:36).

THOUGHT: God can thwart the plans of my enemies.

PRAYER: Lord, may I never fear what man can do to me.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25

PSALM 54

1 SAMUEL 23:27-29

“... *there is a friend that sticketh
closer than a brother.*”

BEWARE WHOM YOU INFORM AGAINST!

This Psalm tells of another episode of David's rich and varied life which provides material for our learning. After David had left Keilah with six hundred men they literally became vagabonds with no sure place of abode. When they found some strongholds in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph, we see a drama acted by two types of people. Jonathan, Saul's son, went to meet David and “*strengthened his hand in God,*” assuring him of his loyalty and support of his acknowledged kingship. While it is said that blood is thicker than water, Jonathan's spiritual tie to David overrode his blood-tie to his father (Prov 18:24).

On the other hand, the Ziphites (or Ziphims) with whom David had no quarrel became self-appointed informers. They reported David's whereabouts to Saul in order, evidently, to curry favour with the mighty. To say the least, they were guilty of grave inhospitality. Nay, they were betraying innocent blood to earn the sour monarch's smile.

It is not wrong to be an informer. Every government employs informers and detectives to thwart the wicked purposes of evil men. In Absalom's rebellion against his father the sons of the two priests loyal to David, Ahimaaz, son of Zadok and Jonathan, son of Abiathar, risked their lives to bring latest information of the coup to the king, and they were commended. It all depends whom we inform against. Be sure where your loyalty lies! Don't back the wrong horse!

Now when Saul came upon David through the information supplied by the Ziphites, he almost found his quarry. At such a crucial hour, David's only help was from Above. Hence the urgent prayer utterances woven into this Psalm. Did God answer David in the nick of time to deliver him? Read 1 Samuel 23:27-29. John Calvin says David was saved from that tight situation by the mysterious prompting of the Holy Spirit in the Philistines who invaded Judah at the height of Saul's campaign against David.

THOUGHT: What type of informer am I?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me when to speak up and when to be silent.

ANATHEMA TO THE TRAITOR

In Psalm 41:9, David complained of treachery within the palace. In Psalm 55:9-11, we find him in another urban setting. We are told of plotters prowling around when "*deceit and guile*" walked the streets. Day and night traitors were perpetrating mischief "*upon the walls.*" This flared up into "*violence and strife*" in the city. Evidently, David is describing an advanced stage of the machinations against him when Ahithophel (David's advisor) openly declared his allegiance for Absalom (2 Sam 15:12; 16:23).

So, David breaks forth into open complaint in Psalm 55:12-15, 19-21. It is not an outside enemy but an inside one. It is his closest friend. He breaks the covenant of loyalty and trust (Ps 55:20). He butters his speech with soothing words, but in his heart are concealed swords drawn ready to strike. In such dire circumstances, David had no recourse but to pray. When one came to tell the king as he was escaping barefoot from Jerusalem that "*Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom,*" David cried on the spot, "*O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.*" No sooner had he uttered this prayer than Hushai met him at the hilltop, God's agent of counter-espionage whom David sent into Absalom's headquarters. Now, Ahithophel had planned a blitzkrieg against David by sending 12,000 men against the fleeing loyalists who should swoop down upon the travel-worn king. Once he was smitten, Ahithophel assured Absalom, all Israel would turn to the new king. "*And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel*" (2 Sam 17:4).

But as "*the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD*" (Prov 21:1), Absalom suddenly turned to Hushai for a second opinion! Hushai counselled a total mobilization of Israel from Dan to Beersheba (north to south) instead. Hushai's strategy was preferred to Ahithophel's for "... *the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom*" (2 Sam 17:14). Having lost face before Absalom's own council, the arch-traitor committed suicide.

THOUGHT: How powerful is my God?

PRAYER: Lord, may I choose always to be on Thy side.

MONDAY, AUGUST 27

PSALM 56

1 SAMUEL 21:10-15

“... *Be ye therefore wise as serpents,
and harmless as doves.*”

SNATCHED FROM THE TIGER'S MOUTH

“*When the Philistines took him in Gath,*” in the heading of Psalm 56, gives us the occasion of this Psalm. It seems Psalm 34 is penned to express the gladness of deliverance after that event, while Psalm 56 centres on the anxiety before the deliverance. This is another of those instances when David, being cornered in a tight spot, surrounded by enemies on every side, had nowhere to turn but to the sky. He simply had to look up for help from Above. He could encourage himself only in the Lord.

David, having come to find shelter in Gath from Saul's pursuit, suddenly realised he was enclosed, as it were, in a prison, for the Philistines had practically put him under house arrest. To pluck himself out of the fire, David acted the fool (1 Sam 21:13). In his heart, however, there went up a hundred pleas to God Almighty for deliverance.

“O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Saviour, And life more abundant and free.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face,
And the fear of men will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.”

-- adapted from Helen H. Lemmel (1864-1961)

How did David encourage himself in the Lord while he pitted his wits against his plotters who were waiting to pounce on him (Ps 56:6)? It was by His Word (Ps 56:4, 10). God's Word is not only “*a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Ps 119:105), but also a source of wisdom that helped David to outwit his enemy (Ps 119:98). His feigning madness was a means whereby God delivered him from the Philistines of Gath. This trial of wits in Gath reminds of David's earlier outwitting of Saul by scaling out of danger through a window in the night. To fool his captors, Michal (David's wife) took a statue and laid it in bed. She added a bolster of goats' hair and covered the resemblance of her husband asleep in bed with a cloth.

THOUGHT: Man's responsibility and God's Sovereignty.

PRAYER: Lord, lead me to do what I need to do as I look up to Thee.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 28

PSALM 57

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

“O LORD God of hosts, who is a
strong LORD like unto thee?”

MUSINGS FROM THE CAVE

For the background of Psalm 57, we have the commentary of Augustus F. Tholuck (1856): “A Psalm composed when David fled from Saul in the cave, which is referred to in Psalm 142, and which, because it is without any other distinction called ‘the cave,’ is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights -- ‘to the sheep-cotes,’ where the cattle were driven in the hottest summer months only -- to hunt him in every hiding place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (verse 1); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (verse 8). His life was really suspended by a hair if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him!”

As to the thoughts behind the title, we have John Flavel (1627 - 1691) for our guide: “This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer-wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Al-taschith*, *Michtam of David*. *Al-taschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject matter. The former signifies destroy not, or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathological ejaculation; *Al-taschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras’ golden verses did.”

THOUGHT: Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.

PRAYER: May there not be any fear in me for Thou art ever near.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29

PSALM 58

1 KINGS 21:1-25

*“A just weight and balance
are the LORD’S ...”*

DAVID VERSUS UNSCRUPULOUS JUDGES

David speaks against the miscarriage of justice by unscrupulous judges effectively by perpetuating their crimes in psalmody. If there is made a catalogue of every criminal to determine which among these can earn the title of public enemy number one, we must agree with David that he is the unscrupulous judge of Psalm 58, whom he unceremoniously denounces.

Now, the balance is the universal symbol of justice. “Scrupulous” comes from the word “scruple,” whose first meaning is a unit of the apothecaries’ weight of twenty grains. When a druggist weighs a doctor’s prescription of some medicinal powder, he cannot but weigh it exactly (no more, no less) to the last grain. If he is measuring some tincture or other fluid he must give (no more, no less) to the last drop. With the same conscientiousness must a judge weigh the evidences and give an unbiased judgment and sentence. When a judge has no scruples, through bribery or other influence he can condone criminals and wreak havoc in society, yea, even topple a nation.

We rejoice with David the righteous king in his scathing exposure of wicked judges with the strongest epithets. He compares their wickedness to the poison of serpents and their devouring of justice to the great teeth of young lions. He roundly curses them to melt like running water and as snails (crawling over a rock under the hot sun) to shrivel, etc. The fiercest of David’s imprecations is that the righteous (the innocent, falsely accused) will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked. When that is executed upon the wicked the balance of justice is restored, so men can say that God the Supreme Judge of the earth is reigning.

Does this Psalm speak to those who have to make judgment (decisions) even in the smallest matters? Remember, justice must be scrupulously dispensed. Hence the balance, fifty-fifty, is the symbol of justice.

THOUGHT: What is the use of a balance?

PRAYER: Lord, may all in positions of judgment judge exactly and accurately.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 30

PSALM 59

1 SAMUEL 19:11-17

*“He taketh the wise in
their own craftiness ...”*

DAVID SAVED FROM “DOGS

This is a Psalm which refers to David being delivered from Saul’s ambush. Who are these, twice mentioned, as they that *“make a noise like a dog”* (Ps 59:6, 14)? The background of this Psalm is found in 1 Samuel 19:11-17. After failing for the third time to kill David with a javelin (1 Sam 19:10), Saul laid an ambush for him around his house in the night. The trap was to be sprung in the morning. David’s wife Michal (Saul’s daughter) got wind of the plot. In the stillness of the night she helped David escape *“through a window.”* How true Job 5:13 is. What a lesson to us who, like sheep living among wolves, should be wise as serpents before our enemies. *“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another ...”* (Matt 10:23). Hence Calvin, before the Paris (Roman Catholic) authorities could take him, also escaped through a window.

David saw no reason why he should be hunted down like a criminal. He protests his innocence (Ps 59:3). Therefore he had the more confidence in God to save him from Saul’s plot. Therefore he could utter such imprecations as in Psalm 59:12-13. *“Slay them not”* in Psalm 59:11 seems paradoxical, but death by stages is greater punishment!

Some commentators, reading Psalm 59:5, 8 where the heathen or nations are mentioned, think these verses were put in by King Hezekiah or Nehemiah to apply to their situation vis-a-vis the Assyrians or the mixed races living around Jerusalem. We agree with Spurgeon that this Psalm comes entirely from David’s pen. Why cannot David, inspired of God, apply this Psalm to the heathen nations with whom he had to contend?

The dog is an unclean animal and this nomenclature is contemptuously used against the heathen. Why could not David use this term against Saul’s underlings? Doeg an Edomite (a Gentile), his chief enemy, was no better than a dog! And did not our Lord call His enemies vipers and Herod *“that fox”* (Luke 13:32)?

THOUGHT: My God is able to save and deliver.

PRAYER: Lord, lead my faith in Thee to greater heights for the days are evil.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 31

PSALM 60

1 CHRONICLES 18

“... one chase a thousand,
and two put ten thousand to flight ...”

FROM DEFEAT TO VICTORY

Psalm 60 may be called a didactic Psalm. The battles fought in the various countries involving Joab, David's commander-in-chief, are recorded in 1 Chronicles 18, 2 Samuel 8 and 10. Aram-naharaim is a loose geographical term referring to Syria up to the Euphrates River and beyond to the Tigris in the far north. Aramzobah is Syria which abuts the northern borders of Israel. Edom, the kingdom of Esau, is in the far south, below the Dead Sea.

Under David, Israel was God's invincible army, when one would chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight (Deut 32:30). With every heathen nation in the north conquered under David's leadership, to lose one battle to Edom in the far south was one devastating psychological blow. Fortunately the day was saved when Israel counter-attacked and *“smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.”*

Psalm 60 is David's agonising prayer (Ps 60:9) to God to save him from a very embarrassing hour in the midst of victories. The defeat before Edom was like experiencing an earthquake! But since Israel was God's banner-bearer on earth for the truth (Ps 60:4), he was confident of deliverance. So in World War II, the Allied Cause being righteous, those who trusted in God had no doubt that victory over the Axis powers would come in the very end.

The towns and tribes in the north to neighbouring countries in the south, viz., Moab and Edom, can be traced in a map of Kingdom Israel under David and Solomon. It is the line-up of the regions in the middle and south of the Empire involved with David's armies, culminating with entrance into Edom. A prayer for God's help for the final assault on Edom closes with confidence in God's help rather than man's. “Self-help with God's help is the best help.” Life is a constant struggle on the earthly plane.

THOUGHT: A victorious Christian can have setbacks. What am I to do?

PRAYER: Let me learn to conquer through kneeling, O Lord!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

PSALM 61

PROVERBS 24:17

*"If thine enemy be hungry,
give him bread to eat ..."*

SENTIMENTS OF A RESTORED KING

Psalm 61 was composed by King David after his son Absalom's rebellion was defeated. There is no jubilation over his enemy. The voice is muted, the tone subdued. The day of victory is the day of mourning, because Absalom was killed by Joab, against the wishes of his father. The bitter-sweet experience of this father-and-son struggle could be tasted by none other than David. David was ordained by God to go through this valley of tears that he might understand the deepest depths of human woes in all his subjects. So with our Lord in His earthly life. Read Hebrews 4:15-16.

Though David was king, he treasured the spiritual and the heavenly. He preferred the Tabernacle to the throne (Ps 61:4). In fact it was he (the moment he came to the throne) who brought the Ark in exile back to Jerusalem. It was he who desired to build God a house and was honoured to receive the architectural plans from the Lord (1 Chron 28:12). This zeal for the Lord earned him a good heritage. God promised to preserve his throne for ever, yea, even for his greater Son, our Lord Jesus, when He returns to rule this earth. In power or out of power, in joy or in sorrow, in peace or in war, David never ceased to look to "*the rock that is higher than I*" (Ps 61:2). Can we find a modern ruler, president or prime minister like David? There is none that approximates his devotion to a tenth, but if there's one, I would vote for Margaret Thatcher. When Christ-blaspheming Dr Jenkins, the then-Bishop of Durham, maligned Thatcher's economic policy, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted Thatcher's reply in Paul's words, "*If any would not work, neither should he eat*" (2 Thess 3:10). A good Methodist, Thatcher recalled Wesley's words: "Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Such principles reflect on her faith in God's Word.

Finally, we see David's heart of gratitude that pleases God. He is so grateful that he would "*daily perform my vows.*" The Bible records many vows made to God (eg. by Samuel's mother) which are accepted by the Lord. Calvin gives his approval to making vows provided you pay them.

THOUGHT: How should I study God's Word?

PRAYER: (Use 2 Timothy 2:15.)

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 2

PSALM 62

ACTS 10:34

“Recompense to no man evil for evil.

Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

HIGH BROW, LOW BROW

This Psalm by David seems to be written not in the vortex of a trying experience or sometime after it, but calmly, perhaps after years of meditation. He confidently declares that God is his salvation and concludes with assurance that God will judge every man according to his work. David reviews perhaps his own life. Since he had trusted the Lord his Rock of salvation all along, he observed that all the fawners and sycophants in his court, who tried to topple him from his throne, were toppled themselves. Those who appoint to throw down God's anointed will be disappointed! Beware which group you join. If you join those who side against God's chosen servant, you will be stung all right! Having said this, David reiterates his trust in the only Rock of his salvation (Ps 62:6). Three times he uses “only” in reference to his Saviour-God, which reminds us of Peter's just-as-emphatic declaration in Acts 4:12. Moreover, He is a Saviour to everyone at all times. We can seek His help on anything. We will not be bothering Him.

The Lord who dwells in the high and holy place dwells also with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit (Isa 57:15). In the light of this situation David examines the rich, the high brow (Ps 62:9) who amass their wealth by lying (or fraud), who boast of their high-powered tactics (robbery). David warns them not to set their heart upon them. Often the rich become rich at the expense of the poor. David examines the poor also. Though they use entreaties (plead for mercy), they steal (Prov 30:9). Put in the balance, both rich and poor weigh less than vanity. High brow, low brow, in God's sight they are of the same character.

We should take heed, be very attentive, when God speaks as our King and Judge. When God speaks once we are to hear it as spoken twice, i.e. a thing confirmed, without mistake, allowing no change or alteration. High brow, low brow, let us take to heart this yet another Psalm of David.

THOUGHT: Am I quick to heed God's Word?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for speaking to me through Thy Word.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

PSALM 63

MATTHEW 16:24-27

Behold, the Lord cometh!

All eyes shall see Him.

“BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS ... WITHIN A WEARY LAND”

David had many wilderness experiences. According to Psalm 63:1 when he was king, the wilderness of Judah he went through must have been his cross under Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 15:23-28; 16:2, 14; 17:16, 29). This would be his worst wilderness experience because it was precipitated in his old age by a rebellious son. Oh to be driven from a kingly court with food and music to a desert waste; with not the sound of bird or beast, to be marooned from a palace full of courtiers and servants to a little straggling company of fugitives. We may not be under similar circumstances, but modern travel to distant foreign lands for business or study can also bring such weariness of body and spirit.

In such a desperate hour, David has a sure recourse to His God. God to him is a loving Father who is more concerned for his welfare than himself. When our minds are heavily burdened, and sleep is denied us by cares, what do we do? We should follow David's example to meditate on God by prayer and retrospection.

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

When David's confidence is restored by recollections of past deliverance (Ps 63:6), then he fills this Psalm with praises and jubilation (Ps 63:7). As for his enemies who seek to kill him, they shall be consigned to hell, they shall be killed by the sword and their carcasses left to the jackals (Ps 63:10). God is not only David's loving Father and Protector, but also Judge against his enemies, not only those who assail him by sword but also with their lying tongues (Ps 63:11). Will God vindicate us as He vindicated David?

THOUGHT: "... thy lovingkindness is better than life ..." (Ps 63:3a)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 63:1.)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

PSALM 64

ROMANS 12:19-21

*“But love ye your enemies,
and do good ...”*

“VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD”

The higher a man goes, the more enemies he makes. David, being king of all Israel, yea also conqueror of Israel’s neighbouring tribes, had more enemies than any other king. A leader of men must expect criticisms, whether constructive or destructive.

Now, when the enemy is without, we must have weapons to defend ourselves when he attacks. In olden days, they used swords and spears, bows and arrows. In modern times, they use rifles and machine guns, tanks and howitzers. To defend against visible attack, we must watch for the direction from which it comes. David not only had defended himself from all these, he had by the physical strength God gave him successfully overpowered his enemies. He had power even over the lion and the bear.

The enemy he talks about in this Psalm is one within his nation, yea in his own palace. These “*workers of iniquity*” (Ps 64:2) plot for his life and rebel against his rule. Their weapons are not swords and arrows but their tongues. Psalm 41 and Psalm 55 elaborate on their tactics and hypocrisies. “*Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt*” (Ps 41:5-7). “*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords*” (Ps 55:21). The most deadly of these psychological arrows is flattery (Prov 29:5).

These plotters against David, thinking that their plot is not seen by anyone, leave no stone unturned (Ps 64:6) “to look for some microbe between the hairs,” as the Chinese saying goes. Is this the way to treat your king? Such treachery against a leader can lead only to a just retribution on themselves! (Never betray your superior!) God, who is Judge of the earth (Gen 18:25), will pay them back in their own coin (Ps 64:7)!

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 64:10.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 64:1.)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

PSALM 65

JOHN 1:1-5

*“God is omnipresent, omniscient
and omnipotent.”*

GOD’S POWER IS MANIFESTED IN SPECIAL AND GENERAL PROVIDENCE

When God’s people turn away from Him, they fall back into heathen darkness. This happened in Isaiah’s time. He challenged backsliding Judah: *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?”* (Isa 8:19). Today, we see the same thing happening to America, because they have by and large left their God. So, even Mrs Reagan (the ex-President’s wife) consulted a clairvoyant woman and sought good fortune through her astrology.

David in this psalm shows a remarkable perception of the Almighty, who is omnipresent and omniscient. He is the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9). By His special providence over the Church, He hears our prayers and accepts our vows and purges our sins. David’s experience of God’s special care upon him helps us to find God through a close personal communion.

“By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation ...” (Ps 65:5). Some will taunt the Lord, “Will He strike me dead?” When God chooses to answer *“by terrible things in righteousness,”* He can, and He will. Take the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

From His special providence and care of His Church, let us look at the world in general. Here we see also His hand in governance. Whereas in Psalm 46 He is supreme over warring nations, in this Psalm He is *“the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea”* (Ps 65:5). As one travels over land and sea, one cannot fail to see the mighty power of God over the whole of creation.

THOUGHT: *“... we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house ...”*
(Ps 65:4)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 65:2.)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

PSALM 66

JOHN 10:37-38

Trust in the Lord.

“IN GOD WE BOAST ALL THE DAY LONG”

The exaltation of God is the topic of this Psalm. After the first four introductory verses, the Psalmist invites his audience to come and see. Jesus uses this method, *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe ...”* (John 10:37, 38). In verses 5 to 7 the Psalmist testifies to God’s “terrible works” in the drying up of the Red Sea (or the River Jordan, which at its highest floodtide overflowed the banks, and looked like a sea, Joshua 3:15). The Psalmist recalls also the hard times that God’s children went through: *“Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place”* (Ps 66:12). Through thick or thin, with God we can come out victorious.

But the most effective sermon is the man himself. The Psalmist augments his case with a personal testimony. He tells how when he met with trouble in his innocence and vowed to God to save him, God heard his cry and vow and saved him.

Vows are the ultimate of earnest prayer made to God, in the hour of great danger, or emergency, and are regulated by God’s Word. *“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”* (Eccles 5:4-6). The Psalmist, having been delivered, did not forget God as many do, but he performed that promise to God that he had uttered in desperation. He paid his vow in full, without discount.

Can you say with the Psalmist, *“In God we boast all the day long?”*

THOUGHT: *“O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard.”* (Ps 66:8)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 66:13.)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

PSALM 67

1 JOHN 1:8-9

“... forgive, and ye
shall be forgiven.”

THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR FORGIVENESS OF HER SINS,
AND FOR SALVATION OF THE WHOLE WORLD

This Psalm may be short, but its scope extends to the whole Church, and from the Church to the whole world. Its scope is as outreaching as the cross, vertically and horizontally.

The cry for mercy (Ps 67:1) “implies the death of all legal hopes or claims of merit ... Forgiveness of sin is always the first link in the chain of mercies experienced by us. Mercy is a foundation attribute in our salvation. The best saints and the worst sinners may unite in this petition” (Spurgeon).

When Dr John Sung held his revival campaign in Tientsin and called to sinners to come to the front to confess their sins, the aged Ting Li Mei, who was China’s Moody in his earlier years, also came up to kneel with the first-timers. This public gesture of the veteran revivalist humbled the younger man to the dust. Whether sinner or saint, we are always at His mercy! *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8-9).

Next, the Church begs for blessing. The word blessing is all comprehensive and far-reaching when it comes from God. But that blessing from God which we should most desire is not in the gift but in the Giver. If He will look at us favourably and approvingly, that is enough.

Now the horizontal. As showers which first fall upon the hilltop soon run down into the valley, so the blessing of the Most High God flows to the whole world through the Church. We are blessed not only for our own sakes but also for the sake of the whole world. Outside of the Church, Jews or Gentiles, the crowds of every nation are perishing in darkness. These countless millions of every tribe and tongue are without Christ, *“having no hope, and without God in the world”* (Eph 2:12).

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 67:3.)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord for Thy forgiveness, and for Thy blessings.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

PSALM 68

EPHESIANS 6:10

Am I a soldier of the cross?

THE CHURCH MILITANT AND THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

After David's failure in his first attempt to bring the Ark back from exile to Jerusalem, he prepared assiduously the second time according to the Law of Moses to sanctify the Levites to carry it. This Psalm is thought by devout commentators to be David's composition for the auspicious yet solemn occasion. David led before the Levites and he increased the grandeur of the holy company with a choir singing and shouting joyously to the accompaniment of an orchestra of wind and string instruments. In this processional liturgy, as it is called, it is natural to recall all the mighty acts of God in the history of the Israelites, beginning with the Exodus. The wilderness journey is mentioned, with high points mentioned all the way, Sinai at the beginning, Bashan at the end (but leaping across centuries) to Mount Zion, *"the hill of God"* (Ps 68:15-16). At Mt Zion begins the royal rule of God under David. Hence the mention of Benjamin immediately paying homage, and of Zebulun and Naphtali that come to add strength to the kingdom (1 Chron 12:29, 33, 34). The Church might have many faithful denominations like the tribes of Israel, nevertheless under God and our Lord Jesus Christ, they are one.

From the Davidic throne in Jerusalem unifying the twelve tribes, the king looks beyond to further conquests, so that the Empire of David and Solomon stretched from Egypt to Assyria. With the martial races subdued, even Egypt now became tributary to Israel, yea, also Ethiopia *"shall soon stretch out her hands unto God"* (Ps 68:31b).

Now, verse 18 is a description of the king returning in triumph to his throne on Mount Zion after battle. In the triumphal return, the king, taking his enemies captive, also brings home spoils for his people. The Apostle Paul applies this verse in Ephesians 4:7-12 to Christ's ascension and bestowing spiritual gifts to the Church His subjects. The Church below continues to fight Christ's battle, so we are called the Church militant. The Church up above with Christ is the Church triumphant.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 68:1.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 68:19.)

“LEST I FORGET GETHSEMANE ... LEAD ME TO CALVARY”

The NIV Study Bible, on the strength of just one verse (Ps 69:35), brushes aside David's authorship. It “suggests a later son of David who ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah (see Ps 69:35). That king may have been Hezekiah (see 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron 29-32).” This is one instance of the license NIV translators take against the Sacred Text.

In this Psalm, David describes another of his quagmire experiences. His soul is totally overwhelmed with the flood waters of his grief, short of being swallowed up by the mouth of the pit (Ps 69:1, 2, 14, 15). This miry clay that is swallowing him, gulp by gulp, is the attack upon him by his enemies.

To make sure that there is no contributory cause from himself, he humbles himself to admit his foolishness and bares his heart for God to examine any unconfessed sin (Ps 69:5). This is a right attitude to adopt whenever we are overtaken by trouble. Though our heart is innocent in the matter, perhaps some sin committed beyond its periphery might have got us involved?

There is however a higher purpose in David's sufferings. God has used these sufferings to adumbrate the sufferings of His greater Son and our Lord. No other Psalm apart from Psalm 22 is as much quoted as this Psalm for some part of Christ's suffering. Scofield comments, “The New Testament quotations from, and references to, this Psalm indicate in what way it adumbrates Christ. It is the psalm of His humiliation and rejection (vv 4, 7, 8, 10-12). Verses 14 to 20 may well describe the exercises of His holy soul in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-45), while verse 21 is a direct reference to the cross (Matt 27:34, 48; John 19:28). The imprecatory verses (vv 22-28) are connected (Rom 11:9-10) with the present judicial blindness of Israel, verse 25 having special reference to Judas (Acts 1:20) who is thus made typical of his generation, which shared his guilt.”

THOUGHT: Have I “*become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children*” (Ps 69:8) because of my faith?

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 69:1.)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

PSALM 70

MATTHEW 11:28-30

The Lord is my Shepherd.

“SAVIOUR, SAVIOUR, HEAR MY HUMBLE CRY”

Let this first line of the refrain to Fanny J. Crosby’s (1820-1915) “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour” serve for a more vivid title to this Psalm as in Psalm 38. “Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry,” which seems to express the pent-up emotions in blind Bartimaeus, again reflects David’s aching heart. The opening words, “*Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD,*” show how urgent David’s plea is to his God. It sounds like someone beating hard on “the door” in the face of extreme danger, crying of “*chiu ming*” (“save life” in Chinese)!

If you compare this psalm with Psalm 40 you will see that it is a duplicate of Psalm 40 verses 13 to 17. Thus, Psalm 70 is extracted from Psalm 40 so that it may be used for an occasion where Psalm 40 is deemed too long. For example, many of John Sung’s choruses were not his own but taken from the refrains of long hymns. Moreover, he made variations of these to suit his purpose. Thus, the chorus of “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross,” according to the revivalist, is:

In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,
All my sins are washed away
In the blood of Jesus.

It is observed that Psalm 70 is a fitting pendant to Psalm 69, and a suitable preface to Psalm 71.

This Psalm differs from Psalm 40 in that its plea is an abrupt and broken cry in an hour of dire distress (Ps 70:1), whereas in Psalm 40 the plea is introduced by “*Be pleased*” (Ps 40:13), which is more formal. God knows our heart, every aching heart, when we cry to Him. Prayer is readily heard when sent not as a letter but as a telegram.

THOUGHT: “*Thou art my help and my deliverer ...*” (Ps 70:5b)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 70:1.)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

PSALM 71

JAMES 4:13-17

*Make each day
count for Jesus.*

SEVENTY YEARS YOUNG

This Psalm was composed by David. The Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) annotates this.

The many pleas to God for salvation and safe-keeping from his enemies breathe the spirit of David. What is striking in this Psalm that tells of his struggles is that he mentions his life from the womb to the grave.

In his old age, when his joints begin to creak and his muscles are lax, when his teeth are gone and his eyes are dim, the great king of Israel must go the way of all flesh. What a picture of weariness and dreariness and self-pity. Visit any old folks home (euphemistically called “senior citizens,” and you qualify at 65) and you will dread your own winter coming. Now, David began life not at thirty when he became king. Rather, from fifteen, a boy ruddy of countenance when he became his father’s sheep boy. There in the arena of bears and lions, he had the first taste of adulthood. His life of active service by calculation would be at least fifty-five years. Who among us can claim such long and illustrious service?

Though retirement age in Singapore is sixty-two and in the USA it is sixty-six which might be raised to sixty-seven, rarely can we find one with an unbroken record. And life is not to be measured in years but in achievement. Our Lord died at thirty-three, but in the short span He did what others might take a hundred. As for David, the Lord took him from the sheep cote to be king of all Israel. Another who has served the Lord fully and beyond his age is Caleb: *“And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. And yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in”* (Josh 14:10-11).

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 71:18.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 71:20.)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

PSALM 72

GALATIANS 3:16

Teach me Thy way, O Lord.

LONG LIVE THE KING!

This Psalm, according to the Hebrew preposition, may be written for Solomon himself. Spurgeon is of the opinion it was written by Solomon. The following is a division of the Psalm by Alexander:

A glowing description of the Messiah's reign as:

1. Righteous (vv 1-7)
2. Universal (vv 8-11)
3. Beneficent (vv 12-14)
4. Perpetual (vv 15-17)

To which are added a Doxology (vv 18-19) and a Postscript (v 20).

This Psalm reflects Solomon's clean and fervent heart desiring to be a wise and just king. The story of Solomon's wise choice of what God would give him in a dream is found in 1 Kings 3:5-15; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12. Charles Hodge in his Systematic Theology (1871) says: "The seventy-second Psalm contains a description of an exalted king, and of blessings of his reign. These blessings are of such a nature as to prove that the subject of the Psalm must be a divine person.

1. His kingdom is to be everlasting.
2. Universal.
3. It secures perfect peace with God and goodwill among men.
4. All men are to be brought to submit to him through love.
5. In him all the nations of the earth are to be blessed; i.e. as we are distinctly taught in Galatians 3:16, it is in him that all the blessings of redemption are to come upon the world. The subject of this Psalm is, therefore, the Redeemer of the world."

Behold, a Greater Solomon is here! *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 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 from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"* (Isa 9:6-7).

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 72:11.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 72:18.)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

PSALM 73

MARK 10:24-25

Count your blessings.

THE WICKED PROSPERS, BUT HOW LONG?

Curiously enough this seventy-third Psalm corresponds with the thirty-seventh in subject matter. It will help our memory to notice the reversed figures, inasmuch as what is given in Psalm 37 is restated from a different angle. The theme is: the prosperity of the wicked and the sorrow of the godly. This is one stumbling block which Job's friends could not get over.

The Psalmist declares at the outset how God stands with Israel, with those whose hearts are clean. "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure." This may truly be said of King David.

But the Psalmist here confesses his succumbing to the envy of the foolish and the wicked (Ps 73:3). His steps, spiritually speaking, have "*well nigh slipped*." Be that as it may, his description of the outward prosperity and behaviour of the wicked is vividly true (Ps 73:4-12). In their protruded eyes, swelled by power and pride, they see not God (Ps 73:11) nor men (Ps 73:8).

The Psalmist speaks of his dilemma from verses 13 to 16 as he looks at the prosperity of the wicked by his own judgment. Surely he is perplexed, and so are we when we try to judge others in our own wisdom.

In verse 17 he sees things in a different light when he enters the Temple to worship. When we come to Church and listen to God's Word expounded to us, we see ourselves measured against God and not alongside our adversaries. We can adopt a "holier than thou" attitude without God, but under His shining light, we become totally undone.

In the eternity of God, man is transient like a dream. All of a sudden we see the wicked as thrown off a slippery road. Sudden destruction comes upon them. In the light of God's righteous judgment upon the wicked the Psalmist realises his stupidity like a brute beast (Job 18:3). So, do we fret ourselves because of evildoers (Ps 37:1)? No!

THOUGHT: "... *the ungodly ... prosper in the world ...*" (Ps 73:12)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 73:25.)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

PSALM 74

REVELATION 6:9-11

Once saved, always saved.

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH CRIES OUT

Who are Israel's enemies who have attacked God's House with axe and hammer, and even "cast fire" into His sanctuary? Whether the Psalmist refers to the Assyrian King Sennacherib or to the Maccabean wars, it is hard to judge. When God's House is destroyed, so are the prophets dispersed, and there is no one to guide the flock. But there is a deadlier and subtler attack when God's House is eaten away as by termites with the introduction of damnable doctrines and heresies into the Church.

What a picture of the Church under fire in every age of war and oppression! This Psalm would reflect the sufferings of the Jews under Hitler's genocide. The Church in China, especially during Mao's regime, could identify herself with the description in this Psalm. But this Psalm does not merely record the brutalities of God's enemies. It is penned to lead the oppressed in crying out to God for judgment. Until judgment is pronounced on the oppressor, the souls of the martyrs in heaven cannot rest from crying, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" (Rev 6:10).

The Psalmist directs us to meditate on His omnipotence and omnipresence. He who is the Creator is also the Governor of the whole creation. He had worked miracles to save Israel, eg. the drying up of River Jordan. Indeed, He is the God who had covenanted with Israel's forefathers to save them. And His covenant name is Jehovah or LORD. (Notice the word LORD is spelt with four capital letters.) He is now being reminded to "*plead thine own cause*" (Ps 74:22). Will He save us? Yes, indeed. "*For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth*" (Ps 74:12).

Should calamity suddenly overtake us through political upheavals, religious persecutions, racial strifes, the Church, though buffeted and shaken, can rest assured that God is on the throne, He is working out His own purposes to His only glory. He will save us to the end. Amen.

THOUGHT: "*They have cast fire into thy sanctuary ...*" (Ps 74:7)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 74:10.)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

PSALM 75

MATTHEW 6:9-10

Teach me Thy way, O Lord.

“JUDGE OF THE NATIONS, SPARE US YET”

In Psalm 75 you will notice two parties speaking. These are the words of God’s people and those of God Himself. In verse 1 the people give thanks and praise to God for some miracles He has done to save them from some heathen nation or nations (Ps 75:3). Perhaps the Assyrians are in the purview of this hymn of praise. Read Isaiah 36 and 37. This passage ends with 185,000 Assyrian troops being destroyed by the angel of the Lord in one night.

In verse 2 we hear God declaring He is “*Judge of all the earth*” (Gen 18:25). Spurgeon says, “When anarchy is abroad, and tyrants are in power, everything is unloosed, dissolution threatens all things, the solid mountains of government melt as wax; but even then the Lord upholds and sustains the right. I bear up the pillars of it. Hence, there is no real cause for fear. While the pillars stand, and stand they must for God upholds them, the house will brave out the storm. In the day of the Lord’s appearing a general meeting will take place, but in that day our covenant God will be the sure support of our confidence.”

The Lord bids the boasters to keep silent and commands the mad oppressors to stay their folly. How calm He is, how quiet His words are, yet how divine the rebuke.

In verses 6 to 8, the people respond that things happen not by chance, but by the sovereign hand of God, and in the rising and sinking of thrones and kingdoms (Dan 5:20-21). When the days of a tyrant are done, then God will make him drink his cup of punishment.

In verse 9, the just will occupy themselves in singing Jehovah’s praises and in verse 10 restored Israel will execute justice, putting down the haughty horns of the wicked but exalting the humble horns of the just. Judge of the nations, spare us yet, lest we forget.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 75:6-7.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 75:1.)

HOW DOES GOD DEAL WITH MAN'S WRATH?

The historical background of Psalm 76 may be traced to 2 Kings 19 where Jerusalem was under siege in the reign of King Hezekiah. The enemy was Assyrian King Sennacherib who defied the God of Israel. Through Isaiah, God assured Hezekiah Jerusalem would be delivered. *"And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses"* (2 Kings 19:35).

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

-- Lord Byron

Salem ("peace") is another name for Jerusalem. In victory God's people celebrate over *"the mountains of prey"* (which refers to the heathen enemies) ever on the rampage to kill. God, who always works good out of men's evil, is praised through the *"wrath of man."* The remainder of man's mischief God will withhold. When we face such odds and are delivered, let us not forget to pay the vows we made in the hour of crisis.

THOUGHT: *"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* (Ps 76:10)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 76:11.)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

PSALM 77

MATTHEW 7:7-11

“... all things work together
for good to them that love God ...”

A CHRISTIAN MUST NEVER SAY DIE

In moments of darkest despair, a Christian may be tempted to take his own life. Some have even tried it, but by God's grace they are delivered in the nick of time. Have you entertained suicidal thoughts? This is very sinful, a sin committed against your own soul! The Sixth Commandment begins with yourself! In Chinese philosophy to hurt your body is to hurt your parents, the givers of your body. This is a breach of filial piety.

Psalm 77 by Asaph on a minor key, nevertheless with strong cryings to God, should help you get out of your blues. How often we lose out by opting out. We are strong in seeking the world but weak in seeking God.

In this Psalm, let us cry out to God with the Psalmist in verses 1 to 3; let us hear him lamenting and arguing with himself in verses 4 to 9. From verses 10 to 15 let us meditate with him Godward. As he meditates on the power and mercy of God he sees as it were a vision of God delivering His people through the Red Sea by the hand of Moses and Aaron. “At this point, as if lost in ecstasy, he hurriedly closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those do who, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words even to weariness” (Spurgeon).

Why should not a Christian say die? He foolishly thinks of suicide when he is strayed far away from God. But here is a lesson from Asaph. In our moments of darkest despair let us cry unto God, our Saviour and Redeemer, yea even our loving Father. As He had delivered the forefathers of the Israelites, so has He saved us, some through several generations since our ancestors believed. As He had saved Israel from Pharaoh and the terrors of the wilderness, so He has saved our fathers from many dangers and strifes. A Christian must never say die!

THOUGHT: “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?” (Ps 77:7)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 77:1.)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

PSALM 78

2 PETER 1:18-21

*Jesus the same yesterday,
today and for ever.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING OUR ROOTS

Psalm 78:1-8 is the preface which tells us and our children and the generations to come the importance of knowing our roots. Moses commanded Israel in Deuteronomy, to teach their children their history, particularly their exodus from Egypt (Deut 8:1-5).

There is a flood-tide of unbelief, compromise and rebellion in the Church world today known as the Ecumenical Movement. Headed by the World Council of Churches representing most Protestant denominations, it has gathered together the Greek Orthodox Church and is in close fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church. Prominent Churchmen like the Archbishop of Canterbury and Billy Graham are involved in the Ecumenical Movement not only with the Pope but also with the Communists. Why has the Protestant Church today returned to Rome and is playing ball with Satan in politics? Said Dr Clyde Kennedy, one-time president of Shelton College, "The reason for Protestants today going back to Rome is their ignorance of their past history." Hence this Psalm on the importance of knowing our roots must be read and re-read. The effectiveness of disseminating truth in psalmody is no less emphasized by Moses who wrote the Song of Moses (Deut 32) after denouncing Israel.

The events of Israel's exodus are familiar to the average reader. Psalm 78:58 takes us to the times of the Judges. In verses 60 to 64 we come to the last judge, old Eli, with his two wicked sons. So, the Tabernacle that was pitched at Shiloh under Joshua in Ephraim was muted, the Ark being captured by the Philistines (1 Sam 4). No church can boast of a glorious past to cover up her present-day backsliding, but that God will abandon her to destruction.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 78:4.)

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to remember Thy works and keep Thy commandments.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

PSALM 79

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Fear Him, and keep

His commandments.

JERUSALEM THE FALLEN

As the events that happened to Jerusalem in Psalm 79 took place at its fall, Asaph's connection with it (who lived in David's time) could only be in his descendants. Spurgeon thinks Jeremiah could have written this Psalm. Whether Jeremiah wrote this Psalm or not, he has plenty of war experiences in Lamentations. We should thank God for peace and pray for the relief of war victims and refugees.

This Psalm describes briefly the fall of Jerusalem to the heathen. It tells of the defilement of the Temple and destruction of the city. To further desecrate the Holy City, the dead bodies of princes and priests were not allowed to be buried. They provided a feast to the carrion birds and beasts. Why has Jerusalem the Golden become Jerusalem the Fallen? This is the way of all flesh, as predicted by Moses: *"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be ... Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out"* (Deut 28:15-19).

From this Psalm and Moses' prediction we can find an explanation to the sad fortunes of the Jews through two thousand years, culminating with Hitler's pogroms that exterminated six million of them during World War II. It is due to their rejecting Jesus their Messiah and rashly bringing the blood of Christ upon themselves and their children.

THOUGHT: *"... thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps."* (Ps 79:1)

PRAYER: *"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever ..."* (Ps 79:13)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

PSALM 80

ROMANS 15:4-6

*“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.”*

SONG OF THE BURNT VINE

After the glorious reign of Solomon, decay and apostasy set in. As a result the Kingdom was split in two, ten tribes to Jeroboam in the North, and two tribes to Rehoboam (Solomon's son) in the South. Ephraim and Manasseh were brothers, sons of Joseph, but Ephraim the younger became the chief tribe of the North. Judah had Simeon absorbed under her leadership in the South. Part of Benjamin belonged to the North and part belonged to the South.

Now, the Northern Kingdom was at this time invaded by Assyria, the ancient superpower. In appealing to God for help, the Psalmist composed this song of the burnt vine. The vine and the fig tree are two plants used often to represent Israel. Isaiah uses the same figure in Isaiah 5:1-7. In the concluding verse 7, Isaiah says the vineyard is the home of Israel and the vine the men of Judah. It tells of its luxuriance and filling the land with its branches. Then came the breaking down of the hedges and the destruction of it by wild beasts, and its being burned down to the ground. Hence the plea to God for salvation and the raising of a strong man to lead them back to God.

This song of the burnt vine is applicable to every Christian nation. There was a time when Britannia ruled the waves. The four hundred years after the Reformation saw England become Protestant and blessed with the Gospel, with great men of God who thundered the Word of God against the sins of the people. God blessed Great Britain with a host of illustrious faithful men: Wycliffe, Knox, Tyndale, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Puritans like John Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, William Burns, etc.

With the infiltration of liberal and modernist teachings by a new breed of Higher Critics since the nineteenth century, the Empire began also to decline. By the end of World War II, the world leadership that was Britain's passed on to the United States.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 80:6.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 80:3.)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

PSALM 81

JOHN 6:37

“... except ye repent,
ye shall all likewise perish.”

A HISTORICAL PSALM

Asaph's footnote seems to be the calling to mind the events of Israel's history, of God's mighty acts, in order to admonish the present generation that has departed from their fathers' faith. Without learning from history, history will repeat itself. Hence the Bible records for us the deeds of heroes of faith, eg. Moses, Samuel and Daniel. The study of Old Testament history is one subject much neglected by the Church.

The Psalmist adds his strength to the rulers of Israel to call God's people to a “solemn feast day,” perhaps the celebration of the Passover. When we come on such a special occasion it is good to prepare items of praise with help of musical instruments. Today there are two extreme recipients to this injunction. The Charismatics overdo this by bringing in worldly instruments and follow their carnal beat. The Hyper-Reformed forbid any other music than the singing of Psalms without any musical instrument at all.

The first part of this Psalm recalls Joseph's rulership over Egypt. But with the passing of Joseph's generation, Israel came under the yoke of the Egyptians. God saved them out of Egypt by way of the wilderness. The waters of Meribah is the place in the region of Mount Horeb, near Rephidim, where Moses struck the rock and water flowed out (Exod 17:7; Num 20:13, 24; 27:14).

The mention of Meribah, meaning “strife,” is obviously used against the present generation of Israelites.

When we turn a stiff neck to God, what is the result? “So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Ps 81:12). But God is always gracious to the penitent. There is a way of return. What Asaph is saying to Israel, he is saying to the Church today.

THOUGHT: “There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.” (Ps 81:9)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thy promise of deliverance in Psalm 81:7.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

PSALM 82

GALATIANS 6:7-10

*“Judge not according to the appearance,
but judge righteous judgment.”*

A JUDICIAL PSALM

Confucius says, “He who rules, let him rule with virtue.” David says, “*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God*” (2 Sam 23:3). When judges “*judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked,*” it is because they are distorted by bribery.

Asaph saw so much corruption in the courts of law that he wrote this Psalm to rebuke wickedness in high places. He reminded the judges what high position they held. They were called “*gods,*” the same Hebrew word “*Elohim*” which term is also used for God Almighty. They were God’s representatives on earth. The Westminster Confession declares God “has ordained civil magistrates, to be, under Him, over the people, for His own glory, and the public good ... for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.”

His judgment must be like the balance that shows a fifty-fifty fairness. Especially towards widows and orphans and the poor and afflicted who are helpless. They need succour in their hour of need. They cannot be rescued from the clutches of the wicked, except by the power of law. Paradoxically, the judges who are to deliver them have lost their sense under the seduction of money, so they who are to give light rather grope in darkness (Ps 82:5).

Asaph is corroborated by the prophet Micah, “*The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money ...*” (Mic 3:11). Beware, pastors and preachers, and Church leaders who hold the key of power in the Church. Do we judge righteously among members of the Church?

THOUGHT: “*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.*” (Ps 82:1)

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be just and fair.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 23

PSALM 83

MATTHEW 6:13

"Follow Me."

A PATRIOTIC PSALM

Every citizen must love his country, the land of his birth. The British call theirs Motherland and the Germans Fatherland. To protect our homeland we must have national service, and we must be prepared to be called to arms in event of war.

Asaph here writes of patriotism for Israel. God's chosen people Israel is God's testimony to the world, a light to the Gentiles. When all around her are gathered the Gentile nations to destroy her, all the more is there need to stir up the sons of light to action against the forces of darkness.

The background of this Psalm seems to be the times of King Jehoshaphat when he was invaded by Ammon, Moab and Edom (2 Chron 20). When Jehoshaphat sought the Lord's help rather than man's, then God came to their help. God sent confusion into the allied armies, so that they began to set upon one another. Does this not reflect the feuds among the Arab forces in Lebanon during the bitter years of civil war in the eighties?

By way of application the true Church of Jesus Christ is often engulfed by foes in the ecclesiastical world. The Ecumenical Movement of the World Council of Churches with the collusion of Rome is a menace to the true Church. The true Church, however, must continually look to her most high God for help and strength.

THOUGHT: "... thou ... JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."
(Ps 83:18)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 83:1- 2.)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

PSALM 84

1 PETER 2:9-10

*“... not willing that any should perish,
but that all should come to repentance.”*

“WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION, BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ZION”

The above is the first line of the refrain, added by Robert Lowry (1826-99) to Isaac Watt’s “Come We that Love the Lord,” so sweet to churchgoers, is borrowed for the title of this Psalm. The sons of Korah are the Levitical choir made up of the descendants of Korah appointed by David to sing in the temple.

Though the authorship of this Psalm is not mentioned, it breathes the spirit of David, whose happiest desire was to build God a House.

Pilgrimages to the Tabernacle were a great feature of Jewish life. Families journeyed together, making bands that grew at each halting place. They camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the valley, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten.

In our modern context this Psalm is surely expressive of a Christian and his family serving overseas in some foreign country where there is no Church to attend. We have been told such a case in some strict Muslim countries. The only chance of joining in worship was at the embassy of a Christian country. How he longed to worship at his home Church and fellowship with brethren and sisters of the same faith, where Jesus Christ is highly exalted. The House of God is open to everybody, even sparrows and swallows (not in the family of clean birds like the pigeon and dove) are welcome. Any non-Christian is welcome to sit in God’s House to hear the Word preached, but more blessed are they who have become God’s children, gaining a place to stay in His House.

THOUGHT: *“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!”* (Ps 84:1)

PRAYER: May I dwell in Thy House and be still praising Thee all my days, O Lord.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

PSALM 85

REVELATION 20:6

To God be the glory!

PAST DELIVERANCE, PRESENT AFFLICTION,
FUTURE GLORIFICATION

Modern commentators would date Psalm 85 after the return from the Babylonian exile because the word “*captivity*” is mentioned (Ps 85:1). Spurgeon argues against it because “*captivity*” need not refer to exile from one’s country inasmuch as Job’s “*captivity*” did not remove him out of his. Besides the captivity of Jacob (which applies to all Israel) is mentioned and not more properly Judah, for the captivity to Babylon concerned only the Jews (the people of Judah).

Spurgeon thinks this Psalm’s author is David. If David is the author, he can be seen here writing of the past deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. Saul was the first to shake the Philistine yoke from off the neck of Israel. David who killed Goliath finally subdued the Philistines. He ascribes it all to God. When you have achieved anything at all, do not pride yourself in your achievement. Give glory to God as David here has done (Ps 85:1-4).

Affliction is David’s experience in some part of his forty-year reign (Ps 85:5-9). At any time when trouble comes to us, let us look up to God in supplication. We can be confident that He will hear us. Let us learn the lesson: “*not turn again to folly.*” The cause of our troubles is often traced to some sin, some offence against God’s Law.

The third portion of this Psalm (Ps 85:10-13) is David’s looking to the future of his kingdom which is the golden age after him in Solomon’s reign. But it surely adumbrates what will flourish in the golden rule of a thousand years of David’s greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We who go through the world in the end times beset with many afflictions need very much to pray to God. We who look up to God can rest assured the age of golden rule and peace of a thousand years on earth will come very soon to pass. In our dark afflictions we can see the silver lining of brighter days to come. Even so come Lord Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 85:8.)

PRAYER: (*Use Psalm 85:2 to thank God.*)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

PSALM 86

LUKE 18:1-8

“Watch and pray ...”

DAVID'S PRAYER

David has penned two Psalms which he has called his very own. One is Psalm 86, also called “David’s Prayer,” though many other Psalms are also prayers. The other is Psalm 145, also called “David’s Praise.” In Hebrew there is a rhyme for these two compositions. One is a tephilla and the other is a tehilla.

In each of these he makes a solemn reference to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7: *“... 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, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”*

David hopes in a merciful, gracious and longsuffering God, so he has assurance of his plea being heard. David prays for guidance. He is willing to be taught so he will walk in the truth. David’s prayer is full of praise. Praise is a part of prayer. Do you praise the Lord in your prayer and not some big man in the Church?

David is encouraged in his prayer that the proud who are against him, who spurn their God, will not prevail. So let us take care not to be on the side of the proud and mighty.

David asks for a token or sign that God is good to him that his enemy might be ashamed. This is a legitimate request. God will vindicate us before our enemies with some particular blessing, which you can readily recognise to be a timely token. Can you think of instances in David’s life when events that worked for his destruction were overturned with God’s help? Read 1 Samuel 26.

THOUGHT: *“... thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive ...”* (Ps 86:5)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 86:11.)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

PSALM 87

ACTS 13:26

“... wait upon the LORD ...”

“GLORIOUS THINGS OF THEE ARE SPOKEN,
ZION, CITY OF OUR GOD”

When Israel entered the Promised Land, they were commanded to pitch the Tabernacle at Shiloh in Ephraim, and there they were to worship. The Tabernacle rested at Shiloh from Joshua to Eli, when the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Though returned to Israel it was kept in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam 7:1).

When David became king, he brought the Ark into Jerusalem. In Jerusalem was the Temple to be built as appointed of the Lord. In Zion, which is David's palace in Jerusalem, and its precincts, is God's House to be established. That's the reason why Zion, or Jerusalem, is loved above all other cities of Israel. The centre of worship for all Israel is here. This is the Holy City of all God's people. Returnees to Israel today go first of all to Jerusalem. Christian pilgrims must see Jerusalem also for here our Lord was crucified and rose again the third day. Even Muslims consider Jerusalem their third holiest city, after Mecca and Medina, on the wrong assumption that Mohammed their prophet ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

Psalm 87:1 tells us that Jerusalem is built in the holy mountains. As one comes from the coast inland one beholds from afar how beautiful for situation is the Holy City. Set on a mountain 2,600 feet above the sea, it soars above the land around it. Spiritually Jerusalem also is above all other cities of Israel for here is the dwelling house of the Lord.

To be born in Jerusalem where the Lord is is truly blessed, yea, even to be born again in the Church of God. We who are born of God are of such nobler birth as not to be compared with those born in such a heathen land as Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia. O what blessing to be born in a Christian family, where there is the light of salvation imparted in our infancy so as to bring us into God's family from the beginning of our young life, whereby our names are written in heaven.

THOUGHT: (*Read Psalm 87:2.*)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, that I am in Thy family.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

PSALM 88

PHILIPPIANS 3:8-10

The Comforter has come.

HEMAN'S LAMENTATIONS

Psalm 88, being a "lamentation," is composed by "Heman the Ezrahite" and given to the sons of Korah to be sung "upon Mahalath Leannoth," i.e. with some musical instrument that gives a mournful sound. Surely it is not with a trumpet, but a flute. "... weep with them that weep" (Rom 12:15). Heman, one of the wisest in Israel, was given a deep exercise in suffering by the Lord, like Jeremiah, so he could compose these lamentations to soothe the souls of others overtaken by grief.

Thus we read in Psalm 42:5-8, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me ... Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*"

As tears well from a sorrowful heart and give relief to the troubled soul, they will clear the eyes to give us a better perspective of a dark situation. What is at one time a matter of mourning to one of God's children may become a matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others. This sad anguish of spirit in Heman is made a song of joy to God's glory. That is why it is also called a song, a Psalm.

Is your heart burdened by grief? Read this Psalm. It is spiritual medicine to your soul. Here you will find that fellowship of suffering that St Paul talks about. "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*" (Phil 3:10). As one commentator has said, "We have in this Psalm the voice of the suffering Redeemer." The greater flutist is Christ!

THOUGHT: "*O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee.*" (Ps 88:1)

PRAYER: "*Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry.*" (Ps 88:2)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

PSALM 89

1 TIMOTHY 1:17

Have I done my best for Jesus?

SING A SONG OF DAVID'S THRONE

The background of Psalm 89 on the establishment of David's throne is found in 2 Samuel 7. As soon as David had finished fighting the Lord's battles, his attention was drawn to building God's House. He spoke to Nathan the prophet, from whom came the reply, "*Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee*" (2 Sam 7:3). For his devotion to the Lord, God blessed him. "... *Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? ... he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee ... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever*" (2 Sam 7:5-13).

Are you zealous for God's Kingdom? The time, energy and money you have given for its extension will surely be rewarded. God returns to you manifold. "*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*" (2 Cor 9:8).

Now the history of the Davidic Kingdom shows how God kept His Word to preserve his throne, although for Solomon's sin ten tribes were rent from David to form the Northern Kingdom. Although the latter part of this Psalm laments the evil days that had befallen the descendants of David, the throne of David will rise yet in the last days, when David's greater Son, will reign: "*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 from henceforth even for ever ...*" (Isa 9:7). This is the Kingdom of Christ during the Gospel age through the Millennial Golden Age to come on earth.

Today Israel, though regathered to the land of their fathers, is beset with innumerable woes from the Arab nations. But as God's chosen people coming under the Covenant they will be delivered when Christ returns to earth. The greater David will sit on His father's throne.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 89:1.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 89:8a.)

**“ONLY ONE LIFE ’T WILL SOON BE PAST
ONLY WHAT’S DONE FOR CHRIST WILL LAST”**

The title of Psalm 90 declares Moses to be its author. Moses has written other Psalms, such as Exodus 15:1-19 and Deuteronomy 32:1-43.

It is Calvin who points out that though man knows his life is short, yet he plans for the things of this life as if he is going to live on earth forever. It is wisdom to make preparations for the next life when we realise, by the average law of life we live to only seventy, and if strong to eighty years. This is the average longevity even in our modern day. Moses having outlived two generations in his time also had to go at 120, though *“his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated”* (Deut 34:7). If modern medicine can increase man’s age to one hundred, it is still two decades below Moses’ age. Reader, how old are you this year? Have you made preparations for the life beyond?

If a man lives up to eighty years in the presence of the eternal Father and God Almighty, it is only like the rising and ebbing of a flood, like a dozing off to sleep, like grass that flourishes in the morning but is mowed down at sunset. It is like a watch in the night, like the telling of a story. Even then there is no guarantee that everyone will live to a ripe old age, for living in a world that is cursed by sin, our life may be cut short by sickness, accident, war, famine, crimes, etc. All these things happen under God’s sovereign hand, by His decretive will or permissive will. So Moses observes, *“Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men”* (Ps 90:3). In verse 7 he says further, *“For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.”*

There are those who, because of man’s shortness of life, adopt an Epicurean philosophy: *“... let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die”* (1 Cor 15:32). But is death the end of all things? Hebrews 9:27 says, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”*

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 90:10.)

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to number my days and to apply my heart unto wisdom.

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