**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**PSALMS-062**. **WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR US by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"15.* *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation."*

*Psalm 91:15-16*

When considering the previous verses of this psalm, I pointed out that at its close we have God's own voice coming in to confirm and expand the promises which, in the earlier portion of it, have been made in His name to the devout heart. The words which we have now to consider cover the whole range of human life and need, and may be regarded as being a picture of the sure and blessed consequences of keeping our hearts fixed upon our Father, God. He Himself speaks them, and His word is true.

The verses of the text fall into three portions. There are promises for the suppliant, promises for the troubled, promises for mortals. He shall call upon Me and I will answer him; that is for the suppliant. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him; that is for the distressed. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation; that is for the mortal. Now let us look at these three.

**I. The promise to the suppliant.**

He will call upon Me and I will answer. We may almost regard the first of these two clauses as part of the promise. It is not merely a Hebrew way of putting a supposition, If he calls upon Me, then I will answer him, nor merely a virtual commandment, Call, if you expect an answer, but itself is a part of the blessing and privilege of the devout and faithful heart. He shall call upon Me; the King opens the door of His chamber and beckons us within.

In these great words we may see set forth both the instinct, as I may call it, of prayer, and the privilege of access to God. If a man's heart is set upon God, his very life-breath will be a cry to His Father. He will experience a need which is not degraded by being likened to an instinct, for it acts as certainly as do the instincts of the lower creatures, which guide them by the straightest possible road to the surest supply of their need. Any man who has learned in any measure to love God and trust Him will, in the measure in which he has so learned, live in the exercise and habit of prayer; and it will be as much his instinct to cry to God in all changing circumstances as it is for the swallows to seek the sunny south when the winter comes, or the cold north when the sunny south becomes torrid and barren. So, then, He shall call upon Me is the characteristic of the truly God-knowing and God-loving heart, which was described in the previous verse. Because he has clung to Me in love, therefore will I deliver him; because he has known My name, therefore will I set him on high, and because he has clung and known therefore it is certain that He will call upon Me.

My friend! do you know anything of that instinctive appeal to God? Does it come to your heart and to your lips without your setting yourself to pray, just as the thought of dear ones on earth comes stealing into our minds a hundred times a day, when we do not intend it nor know exactly how it has come? Does God suggest Himself to you in that fashion, and is the instinct of your hearts to call upon Him?

Again, we see here not only the unveiling of the very deepest and most characteristic attribute of the devout soul, but also the assurance of the privilege of access. God lets us speak to Him. And there is, further, a wonderful glimpse into the very essence of true prayer. He shall call upon Me. What for? No particular object is specified as sought. It is God whom we want, and not merely any things that even He can give. If asking for these only or mainly is our conception of what prayer is, we know little about it. True prayer is the cry of the soul for the living God, in whom is all that it needs, and out of whom is nothing that will do it good. He shall call upon Me, that is prayer.

I will answer him. Yes! Of course the instinct is not all on one side. If the devout heart yearns for God, God longs for the devout heart. If I might use such a metaphor, just as the ewe on one side of the hedge hears and answers the bleating of its lamb on the other, so, if my heart cries out for the living God, anything is more credible than that such a cry should not be answered. You may not get this, that, or the other blessing which you ask, for perhaps they are not blessings. You may not get what you fancy you need. We are not always good at translating our needs into words, and it is a mercy that there is Some One that understands what we do want a great deal better than we do ourselves. But if below the specific petition there lies the cry of a heart that calls for the living God, then whether the specific petition be answered or dispersed into empty air will matter comparatively little. He shall call upon Me, and that part of his prayer I will answer and come to him and be in him. Is that our experience of what it is to pray, and our notion of what it is to be answered?

**II. Further, here we have a promise for suppliants.**

I take the next three clauses of the text as being all closely connected. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honour him--in trouble, His presence; from trouble, His deliverance; after trouble, glorifying and refining. There are the whole theory and process of the discipline of the devout man's life.

I will be with him in trouble. The promise is not only that, when trials of any kind, larger or smaller, more grave or more slight, fall upon us, we shall become more conscious, if we take them rightly, of God's presence, but that all which is meant by God's presence shall really be more fully ours, and that He is, if I may say so, actually nearer us. Though, of course, all words about being near or far have only a very imperfect application to our relation to Him, still the gifts that are meant by His presence--that is to say, His sympathy, His help, His love--are more fully given to a man who in the darkness is groping for his Father's hand, and yet not so much groping for as grasping it. He is nearer us as well as felt to be nearer us, if we take our sorrows rightly. The effect of sorrow devoutly borne, in bringing God closer to us, belongs to it, whether it be great or small; whether it be, according to the metaphor of an earlier portion of this psalm, a lion or an adder; or whether it be a buzzing wasp or a mosquito. As long as anything troubles me, I may make it a means of bringing God closer to myself.

Therefore, there is no need for any sorrowful heart ever to say, I am solitary as well as sad. He will always come and sit down by us, and if it be that, like poor Job upon his dunghill, we are not able to bear the word of consolation, yet He will wait there till we are ready to take it. He is there all the same, though silent, and will be near all of us, if only we do not drive Him away. He will call upon Me and I will answer him; and the beginning of the answer is the real presence of God with every troubled heart.

Then there follows the next stage, deliverance from trouble; I will deliver him. That is not the same word as is employed in the previous verse, though it is translated in the same way in our Bibles. The word here means lifting up out of a pit, or dragging up out of the midst of anything that surrounds a man, and so setting him in some place of safety. Is this promise always true, about people who in sorrow of any kind cast themselves upon God? Do they always get deliverance from Him? There are some sorrows from the pressure of which we shall never escape. Some of us have to carry such. Has this promise no application to the people for whom outward life can never bring an end of the sorrows and burdens that they carry? Not so. He will deliver us not only by taking the burden off our backs, but by making us strong to carry it, and the sorrow, which has changed from wild and passionate weeping into calm submission, is sorrow from which we have been delivered. The serpent may still wound our heel, but if God be with us He will give us strength to press the wounded heel on the malignant head, and we can squeeze all the poison out of it. The bitterness remains; be it so, but let us be quite sure of this, that though sorrow be lifelong, that does not in the least contradict the great and faithful promise, I will be with him in trouble and deliver him, for where He is there is deliverance.

Lastly, there is the third of these promises for the troubled. I will honour him. The word translated honour is more correctly rendered glorify. Is not that the end of a trouble which has been borne in company with Him; and from which, because it has been so borne, a devout heart is delivered even whilst it lasts? Does not all such sorrow hallow, ennoble, refine, purify the sufferer, and make him liker his God? He for our profit, that we should be partakers of His holiness. Is not that God's way of glorifying us before heaven's glory? When a blunt knife is ground upon a wheel, the sparks fly fast from the edge held down upon the swiftly-revolving emery disc, but that is the only way to sharpen the dull blade. Friction, often very severe friction, and heat are indispensable to polish the shaft and turn the steel into a mirror that will flash back the sunshine. So when God holds us to His grindstone, it is to get a polish on the surface. I will deliver him and I will glorify him.

**III. Last of all, we have the promise for mortals.**

With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation. I do not know whether by that first clause the Psalmist meant, as people who sometimes like to make the Psalmist mean as little as possible tell us that he did mean, simply length of days. For my own part I do not believe that he did. He meant that, no doubt, for longevity was part of the Old Testament promises for this life. But length of days does not satisfy all old people who attain to it, and that satisfaction necessarily implies something more than the prolongation of the physical life to old age. The idea contained in this promise may be illustrated by the expression which is used in reference to a select few of the Old Testament saints, of whom it is recorded that they died full of days. That does not merely mean that they had many days, but that, whatever the number, they had as many as they wished, and departed unreluctantly, having had enough of life. They looked back, and saw that all the past had been very good, and that goodness and mercy had determined and accompanied all their days, and so they did not wish to linger longer here, but closed their eyes in peace, with no hungry, vain cravings for prolonged life. They had got all out of the world which it could give, and were contented to have done with it all.

So this promise assures us that, if we are of those who, in the midst of fleeting days, lay hold on the Ancient of Days and live by Him, we shall find a table spread in the wilderness, and like travellers in an inn, having eaten enough, shall willingly obey the call to leave the meal provided on the road, and pass into the Father's house, and sit at the bountiful feast there.

The heart that lives near God, whether its years be few or many, will find in life all that life is capable of giving, and when the end comes will not be unwilling that it should come, nor hold on desperately to the last fag-end and fragment of life that it can keep within its clutches, but will be satisfied to have lived and be contented to die.

Nor is this all, for says the Psalmist, I will show him My salvation. That sight comes after he is satisfied with length of days here. And so I think the fair interpretation of the words, in their place in this psalm, is, that however dimly, yet certainly, here the Psalmist saw something beyond. It was not a black curtain which dropped at death. He believed that, yonder, the man who here had been living near God, calling to Him, realising His presence, and satisfied with the fatness of His house upon earth, would see something that would satisfy him more. I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness. That is satisfaction indeed, and the vision, which is possession, of that perfected salvation is the vision that makes the blessedness of heaven.

So, dear friends! we, if we will, may have access to God's chamber at every moment, and may have His presence, which will make it impossible that we should ever be alone. We may have Him to deliver us from all the evil that is in evil, and to turn it into good. We may have Him to purge, and cleanse, and uplift, and change us into His likeness, even by the ministry of our trials. We may get out of life the last drop of the sweetness that He has put in it; and when it comes to a close, may say, It is enough! Let Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, and then we may go to see it better in that world where we shall all, if we attain thither, be satisfied when we awake in His likeness.