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

**PSALMS-081**. **THE SATISFIER OF ALL DESIRES by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"16. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing ... 19. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them."*

*Psalm 145:16, 19*

You observe the recurrence, in these two verses, of the one emphatic word desire. Its repetition evidently shows that the Psalmist wishes to run a parallel between God's dealings in two regions. The same beneficence works in both. Here is the true extension of natural law to the spiritual world. It is the same teaching to which our Lord has given immortal and inimitable utterance, when He says, Your heavenly Father feedeth them. And so we are entitled to look on all the wonders of creation, and to find in them buttresses which may support the edifice of our faith, and to believe that wherever there is a mouth God sends food to fill it. Thou openest Thine hand--that is all--and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. But to fulfil the desires of them who are not only living things, but who fear Him, is it such a simple task? Sometimes more is wanted than an open hand before that can be accomplished. So, looking not only at the words I have read, but at the whole of their setting, which is influenced by the thought of this parallelism, we see here two sets of pensioners, two kinds of wants, two forms of appeal, two processes of satisfaction.

**I. Two kinds of pensioners.**

Every living thing-- life makes a claim on God, and whatever desires arise in the living creature by reason of its life, God would be untrue to Himself, a cruel Parent, an unnatural Father, if He did not satisfy them. We do not half enough realise the fact that the condescension of creation lies not only in the act of creating, but in the willing acceptance by the Creator of the bonds under which He thereby lays Himself; obliging Himself to see to the creatures that He has chosen to make. And so, as one of the New Testament writers puts it, in his simple way, with a profound truth, He is a faithful Creator; and wherever there is a creature that He has made to need anything, He has thereby said, As I live, that creature shall have what it needs.

Then, take the other class, them that fear Him; or as they are described in the context--by contrast with the wicked who are destroyed--the righteous. That is to say, whilst, because we are living things, like the bee and the worm, we have a claim on God precisely parallel with theirs for what we may need by reason of His gift, which we never asked for, His gift of life, we shall have a similar but higher claim on Him if we are they that fear Him with that loving reverence which has no torment in it, and that love Him with that reverential affection which has no presumption in it, and whose love and fear coalesce in making them long to be righteous like the Object of their love, to be holy like the Object of their fear. And just as the fact of physical life binds God to care for it, and to give all that is needed for its health, growth, blessedness, so the fact of man's having in his heart the faintest tremor of reverential dread, the feeblest aspiration of outgoing affection, the most faltering desire after purity of life and conduct, binds God to answer these according to the man's need. Of all incredibilities in the world, there is nothing more incredible, because there is nothing more contrary to the very depths of the divine nature, than that desires, longings, expectations, which are the direct result of the love and fear of God, and the hunger and thirst after righteousness, should not be answered.

Now that is a very wide principle, and I do not believe that it is trusted enough by many. It comes to this--wherever you find in people a confidence which grows with their love of God, be sure that there is, somewhere or other in the universe of things, that which answers it.

Take a case. If there was not a word in the New Testament about Jesus Christ's resurrection, the fact that just in proportion as men grow in devotion, in love of God, in fear of Him, in longing to be good and to appear like Him, in that same proportion does their conviction that there must be a life beyond the grave become firm and certain--that fact would be enough to make any one who believed in God sure that the hope thus rooted in love to Him, and fed by everything that draws us nearer to Him, could not be a delusion, nor be destined to be left unfulfilled.

And we might go round the whole circle of dim religious aspirations and desires, and find in all of them illustrations of the principle so profoundly and so simply put in our psalm, that the same Love which, in the realm of the physical world, binds itself to satisfy the life which it imparts, is at work in the higher regions, and will fulfil the desires of them that fear Him.

**II. Again, there are two sets of needs.**

The first of them is very easily disposed of. The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat. That is all. Feed the beast, and give it the other things necessary for its physical existence, and there is no more to be done. But there is more wanted for the desires of the men that love and fear God. These are glanced at in the context, He also will hear their cry, and will save them; the Lord preserveth all them that love Him. That is to say, there are deeper needs in our hearts and lives than any that are known amongst the lower creatures. Evils, dangers inward and outward, sorrows, disappointments, losses of all sorts shadow our lives, in a fashion which the happy, careless life of field and forest knows nothing about. Give them their meat, and they curl themselves up and lie down to sleep, satisfied. Man longs for something more and needs something more.

He will save them. Now, I do not suppose that save here is employed in its full New Testament sense, but it approximates to that sense. And, further, there are other aspects of our needs set forth in the context, on which I briefly touch. Do not let us vulgarise such a saying as this of my text, He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him, as if it only meant that if a man fears God he may set his longing upon any outward thing, and be sure to get it. There is nothing so poor, so unworthy as that promised in Scripture. For one thing, it is not true; for another, it would not be good if it were. The way to spoil children is not the way to perfect saints; and to give them what they want because they want it, is the sure way to spoil children of all ages. We may be quite certain that our heavenly Father is not going to do that. The promise here means something far nobler and loftier. The fact of creation binds God to supply all the wants which spring from life. The fact of our loving and fearing Him binds Him to supply all the wants which spring from our love and fear. And it is these desires which the Psalmist is thinking of.

What is the object of desire to a man who loves God? God. What is the object of desire to a man who fears Him? God. What is the object of desire to a righteous man? Righteousness. And these are the desires which God is sure to fulfil to us. Therefore, there is only one region in which it is safe and wise to cherish longings, and it is the region of the spiritual life where God imparts Himself. Everywhere else there will be disappointments--thank Him for them. Nowhere else is it absolutely true that He will fulfil the desires of them that fear Him. But in this region it is. Whatever any of us desire to have of God, we are sure to get. We open our mouths and He fills them. In the Christian life desire is the measure of possession, and to long is to have. And there is nowhere else where it is absolutely, unconditionally, and universally true that to wish is to possess, and to ask is to have.

Oh! then, is it not a foolish thing for us to worry and torture and sweat, in order to win for ourselves for a little while the uncertain possession of incomplete bliss? Would it not be wiser, instead of letting the current of our desires dribble itself away through a thousand channels in the sand and get lost, to gather it all into one great stream which is sure to find its way to the broad ocean? Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart, for these will then be after Himself, and Himself only.

**III. Further, there are here two forms of appeal.**

The eyes of all wait upon Thee. That is beautiful! The dumb look of the unconscious creature, like that of a dog looking up in its master's face for a crust, makes appeal to God, and He answers that. But a dumb, unconscious look is not for us. He also will hear their cry. Put your wish into words if you want it answered; not for His information, but for your strengthening. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things before ye ask Him. What then? Why should I ask Him? Because the asking will clear your thoughts about your desires. It will be a very good test of them. There are many things that we all wish, which I am afraid we should not much like to put into our prayers, not because of any foolish notion that they are too small to find a place there, but because of an uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps they are not the kind of things that we ought to wish. And if we cannot make the desire into a cry, the sooner we make it dead as well as dumb the better for ourselves. The cry will serve, too, as a stimulus to the wishes which are put into words. Silent prayer is well, but there is a wonderful power on ourselves--it may be due to our weakness, but still it exists--in the articulate and audible utterance of our petitions to God. I would fain that all of us were more in the habit of putting into distinct words that we ourselves can hear, the wishes that we cherish. I am sure our prayers would be more sincere, less wandering, more earnest and real, if they were spoken, as well as felt, prayers.

Let us remember, dear brethren! that the condition of our getting the higher gifts is not only that we should love and fear, and in the silence of our own hearts should wish for, but that we should definitely ask for, them. Not only desire, but their cry, brings the answer.

**IV. And now one last word. Note the two processes of satisfying.**

Thou openest Thine hand. That is enough. But God cannot satisfy our deepest desires by any such short and easy method. There is a great deal more to be done by Him before the aspirations of love and fear and longing for righteousness can be fulfilled. He has to breathe Himself into us. Lower creatures have enough when they have the meat that drops from His hand. They know and care nothing for the hand that feeds. But God's best gifts cannot be separated from Himself. They are Himself, and in order to satisfy the desires of them that fear Him there is no way possible, even to Him, but the impartation of Himself to the waiting heart.

That is a mystery deep and blessed. Oh, that we may all know, by our own living experience, what it is to have not only the gifts which drop from His hands, but the gifts which cannot be parted from Him, the Giver! He has to discipline us for His highest gifts, in order that we may receive them. And sometimes He has to do that, as I have no doubt He has done it with many of us, by withholding or withdrawing the satisfaction of some of our lower desires, and so emptying our hearts and turning the current of our wishes from earth to heaven. If you are going to pour precious wine into a chalice, you begin by emptying out the less valuable liquid that may be in it. So God often empties us, in order that He may fill us, and takes away the creatures in order that we may long for the Creator.

Not only has He to give us Himself, and to discipline us in order to receive Him, but He has to put all His gifts which meet our deepest desires into a great storehouse. He does not open His hand and give us peace and righteousness, and growing knowledge of Himself, and closer union, and the other blessings of the Christian life, but He gives us Jesus Christ. We are to find all these blessings in Him, and it depends upon us whether we find them or not, and how much of them we find. You will always find as much in Christ as you want, but you may not find nearly as much in Him as you could; and you will never find as much in Him as there is. God sends His Son, and in that one gift, like a box wherein sweets compacted lie, are all the gifts that even His hand can bestow, or our desires require. So be sure that you have what you have, and that you suck out of the Rose of Sharon all the honey that lies deep in its calyx. Expand your desires to the width of Christ's great mercies; for the measure of our wishes is the limit of our possession. He has laid up the supply of all our need in the storehouse, which is Christ; and He has given us the key. Let us see to it that we enter in. Ye have not because ye ask not. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.