

A Cure for a Weak Heart

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"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD."

[Psalm 31:24.](#)

THERE is no preaching like that which grows out of our own experience. You perceive, dear Friends, that David had trusted in the Lord. In very sore and singular trouble God had delivered him and, at the close of that deliverance, he wrote this Psalm, to be sung by the faithful of all times and every clime, and then he gave this exhortation which grew out of his own experience. O my Brothers, we shall never speak to the heart of our hearers unless what we say has been first engraved on our own hearts! The best notes of a sermon are those that are written on our own inner consciousness. If we speak of the things which we have tasted, and handled, and made our own, we speak with a certainty and with an authority which God is pleased to use for the comfort of His people. Think, then, that you can hear David, who has long since fallen asleep, speaking out of his royal tomb and saying, as the result of his own happy experience, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord."

I. In considering this text, I would first of all bid you notice AN APPROVED COMPANY to whom the Psalmist is speaking—"all you that hope in the Lord."

We must not regard all parts of the Bible as addressed alike to every individual. It has many messages to all the sons of Adam, but there are certain portions of it which are enclosed and belong only to that seed according to promise which is distinguished by faith, whereby it is known to be in Covenant with God. Holy Scripture discriminates—it makes some general promises, but its choicer words are given to persons of a special character. Judge for yourselves how far you come under the description of the text, "all you that hope in the Lord."

You perceive, first, that they are men of hope. They have not yet all they expect to have—they have not yet entered into possession of their full inheritance. They have a hope which is looking out for something better than before. They have a living hope which peers into the future beyond even the dark river of death, a hope with eyes so bright that it sees things invisible to others, and gazes upon glories which the unaided human eye has never beheld! Have you this good hope? Do all your measures lie about you or behind you? If so, the text speaks not to you—this arrow flies beyond you. If you are, indeed, a child of God, your hope lies where as yet your eyes do not see, nor your hands grasp. God's people are a

hoping people and, therefore, hoping for the fulfillment of the promises God has made to them.

Next, they hope for good things. This is implied when the Psalmist speaks of those that hope in the Lord, for no man hopes for evil things whose hope is in the Lord! We are not led, by hoping in the Lord, to hope even for temporal things beyond a certain limit. We hope not for riches! We hope not for a long continuance here, for we have heard a voice saying unto us, "This is not your rest, for it is polluted." Our hope could not, even if it would, content itself with the things which are seen and temporal—we are hoping for a city whose Builder and Maker is God! We are hoping for joys which eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man. We are hoping for things so good that they can only come from God, Himself! Our hope about them, therefore, is entirely in Him. Are you a man with this good hope? Are you a man with a hope that you would not exchange for ten thousand worlds? Perhaps, out of your box, like Pandora's, everything that seemed solid has gone—but at the bottom there lies a hope which does not fly away. This is the bird which sits and sings both day and night within your soul, even though you are shut up from going into the common haunts of men. You have a hope, a good hope, a hope of good things to come in the hereafter, in the islands of the blessed, where you shall be forever at home with your God!

If you are the persons spoken of in the text, this hope of yours is rooted, grounded and established in the Lord—"all you that hope in the Lord." You have not a hope apart from the ever-blessed Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the Father you look with the expectation of a child who is an heir. To the Son of God you look, waiting for that wedding feast which shall be kept with Him to whom you are affianced by a betrothal that never can be contravened. To the Holy Spirit you look, for He is with you even now as the earnest of your inheritance, and you expect your inheritance to be of the same nature as the earnest which you already enjoy—and that you will be filled with His light, love, purity and blessedness. For this you are looking, "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Can you say that? We are men of great expectations, but our expectations are not in men that die, or men that live—our expectations are in Him who never dies, never fails and never disappoints those who put their trust in Him. Say, dear Hearer—I cannot come round and put the question to all of you individually—but say, Do you belong to this approved company of men that hope in the Lord?

I may further say that some of them do not get much beyond hope. I would not condemn them because of this—I must not judge those whom God has not condemned. I like to hear a child of God speak of the full assurance of faith, for full assurance is the proper tone of an educated faith. He that believes ought to be assured of the thing which he believes—otherwise, why does he believe it? And it is good when the milk of faith has stood so long that you can see the cream of full assurance floating upon the surface of it. Yet I know that if you

do not have full assurance and if the most you say is, "I hope," you are included in the blessed company to whom the Psalmist speaks—"all you that hope in the Lord." O Little-Faith, Miss Much-Afraid, Mr. Feeble-Mind and Mr. Fearing—all of you who belong to that very numerous family, all of you who are like Pharaoh's lean cattle—God loves you! These feeble ones are carried in the Savior's bosom, or gently led by His loving hand. Do not exclude yourself, I pray you, from any sweetness which lies in the text, "all you that hope in the Lord." Indeed, my text seems to me to have an arm like that of the Good Shepherd. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm," as if He would put His arm around them to draw them close up to His heart.

"All you that hope in the Lord"—you who are so little, you who are so useless, you who are so trembling, you who are not what you want to be, you who can see your own imperfections rather than anything else, you who groan rather than sing because you cannot as yet overcome your besetting sins—do you hope in the Lord? My text speaks to all that hope in the Lord and I should like so to preach from it that if I should omit any of you who are strong, I should, at any rate, apply the text to those who are very weak and trembling! "All you that hope in the Lord." This passage picks up the undermost. It seems to come like the men with the ambulance, to look after the wounded and carry them on at the same pace as those who march in the fullness of their strength!

This, then, is the approved company—"all you that hope in the Lord." Not, "you that hope in yourselves." Not, "you that hope in your priests." Not, "you that have any confidences anywhere else"—but you who hope in God alone!

II. Well now, secondly, my text seems to intimate that there is AN OCCASIONAL WEAKNESS—I might say, A FREQUENT WEAKNESS which is apparent in many of those that hope in the Lord.

It is a dangerous weakness, for it is a weakness of the heart. The text says, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart." Wherein it is implied that sometimes the heart of them that hope in the Lord grows weak. As you well know, heart disease is a very dangerous disease—even if a very little is wrong with the heart, it is a serious matter—for every other part of the body will be affected. Some of God's own people are occasionally and, many of them very often, subject to a weakness of the heart. They lose their courage, their joy departs from them and they become timorous and fearful.

This weakness occurs on many occasions. Sometimes we have seen those who hope in the Lord very weak in heart under great suffering. Pain follows pain—it seems as if every cut of the knife went deeper than the last and that the knife was sharper every time. Oh, let me tell you who are in vigorous health, have no bodily pain and do not always sympathize as you might with those who are the subjects of acute suffering—it is not as easy as you think to bear such pain as some of us have to endure! Let a man have an intolerable headache by the week, together, or it may be a sharp attack of rheumatism. Let sciatica come upon him

or some of those terrible nerve pains that touch us to the very quick and you will see whether he who boasted of his strength finds that he has any strength to spare! At such times the spirits sink and the heart's action grows feebler and feebler.

So is it, also, in the battle of life. A man is struggling hard to gain a livelihood. Perhaps he has not any means of earning even bread for his wife and children. It is very trying for a man when the cupboard is bare and the children's clothes scarcely cover them from the cold. In such circumstances his heart sometimes fails him and then it is that God bids him be of good courage and strengthens his heart.

This weakness of heart is particularly felt in times of temptation. I have known Christian men who have had to work among ungodly companions and their spirits have been vexed every day with the filthy conversation of the wicked—and their taunts, and jeers, and blasphemies! And in such cases the heart has oftentimes grown very heavy, sick and faint. Those of us who love the old-fashioned Gospel cannot look abroad, today, and see so many pulpits turned against our God and many so-called "thinkers" deserting the old faith, without feeling that this is a burden which presses upon us very sorely. And our heart grows heavy and, perhaps, becomes weak.

I have also seen some Christians troubled with this complaint in the midst of great labor for the Lord. They are doing all they can do and yet they do not see the success they expected. They are not weary of the work, but they are weary in it. They see very clearly the imperfections in their service and they are further troubled because some who should help them, do not. They meet with cold hearts where they reckoned on enthusiasm! Instead of generosity, it may be that there is stinginess and, instead of prayerfulness burning like coals of juniper, there is lukewarmness or spiritual death. At such times the man of God puts his hand on his bosom and he says, "My heart, my heart fails me." Then the message of the text comes in, "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the Lord." Most men are subject to fainting fits at times. Even David became weak and faint. And Samson, after he had cried exultingly, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass, have I slain a thousand men," yet, for lack of a drink of water, was ready to lie down and faint and die! The best of men are but men at the best and, therefore, who wonders if their heart sometimes fails them in the day of suffering, in the hour of battle, or under the broiling sun when they are laboring for their Lord?

If this weakness of the heart should continue, it will be very injurious. At the present time, I believe that it restricts enterprise. That young man would go as a missionary to China, but his heart fails him. There is another who would be found in the Congo, seeking to preach Christ, but he has not the needed courage. There is a Sister who would be taking a Bible class, or visiting in the district where she lives, but she cannot summon the resolution to begin. Oh, how many good resolves and holy projects never come to anything! We see the bud and blossom, but they do not knit into fruit as they ought to! I hardly dare to think of

the vast quantity of talent in the Redeemer's Kingdom that lies unused, often for lack of moral courage and confidence in God! I do not think that we are at all lacking in confidence in ourselves—at any rate, some of us are not—but it is confidence in God which is needed—and that is quite another thing. This confidence makes the feeble strong and the timid brave—may we all have a large share of it! God deliver us from faintness of heart lest we injure the Kingdom of our Lord by withholding our service!

And, dear Friends, this weakness of heart endangers the success of the best worker. He who fights most valiantly may be on the verge of victory and yet be defeated if his heart should then fail him. I have no doubt, in reading the records of many campaigns, you, too, must have noticed that men have gone on from victory to victory and suddenly there has been a pause because their hearts failed them just when, had they followed up their previous successes, they would have swept all before them! Beware, you who have served God with courage, lest fear should take hold upon you and you should flinch in the day of battle and miss that which you might have won for your Lord!

This feeble heart pleads many excuses. I do not marvel that it does—how can I, when I know myself? O Brothers, Sisters, if you look within, well may your hearts fail you! And if you look without, upon the temptations that waylay you, upon the powers of darkness so strongly entrenched within their fortresses, well may you faint! What a task we undertake in trying to win a single soul, much more in seeking to win a city or the world for Christ! Well may our hearts fail if we begin to look away from God. The fable is told of Hercules, that he fought with a famous giant whom he could not, for a while, overcome because he was born of the earth and every time he was hurled to his mother, earth, he rose renewed in strength. Hercules tugged and strove with his gigantic foe and felt that the struggle was hopeless, till he discovered his adversary's secret—then he took him in his arms and hugged the monster to death!

You and I are invincible though a thousand stronger than Hercules should be against us—as long as we can fall back on our God! And the only hope of the enemy's victory is if he can keep us away from God. But even if he should throw us down and seem to break us in pieces, yet in that fall we fall upon our God and rest on Him, alone. We may lie prone upon the earth and cry, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." Come into contact with your God, fall upon Divine power and you will rise with new force and new strength! But, if you should once be separated from Him, then it would be all over with you. Yet, blessed be His name, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

III. Now, thirdly, I call your most earnest heed to the trumpet voice of the exhortation in the text, A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION—"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart."

I like the way this is put. It is not alone, "Be of good courage." There is an, "and" with it—"and He shall strengthen your heart." At the same time, the exhortation is not omitted. It does not say, "He shall comfort your heart, therefore you need do nothing." They err from the Scriptures who make the Grace of God a reason for doing nothing—it is the reason for doing everything! They who say that predestination and the working of a living God put man out of the field, make a gross mistake—it is these facts that bring man into the field. The most stern predestination is not the least in conflict with the most perfect freedom of the human will. I may not be able to explain how it is so to you, but I know that it is so as a matter of fact—and that God requires us to be of good courage at the same moment that He says that He will strengthen our heart.

Dear Friends, if you want to get out of diffidence, timidity and despondency, you must wake yourselves up. This is incumbent upon you, for the text puts it so—"Be of good courage." Do not sit still, rub your eyes and say, "I cannot help it, I must always be dull like this." You must not be so! In the name of God, you are commanded in the text to "be of good courage." If you are indolent like that, you must not expect the Grace of God to operate upon you as though you were a block of wood and could be made into something against your will. Oh, no! You must determine to be of good courage. Therefore, arise, and shake yourself from the dust. Believe, dear Friend! Put your trust in God. "Give to the winds your fears." Take down your harp from the willows. "I cannot play it," you say. Get it down, all the same—even if you cannot play it, lay your fingers upon the strings—it is wonderful how, when once those accustomed fingers touch the well-beloved strings, it seems as if they were charmed into music. Do what you can and God will do for you what you can by no means do for yourself!

I know that a great many who are very sad and low in spirit come in here on a Thursday night—and their friends say to them, "We wish that we could cheer you up." I do not say that, but I do say this, "Be of good courage. Be of good courage!" It is the Lord's command to you. Do you not think that your God deserves to be trusted? What has He ever done that you should doubt Him? Does He not deserve your most confident faith? And what do you expect to get out of your timidity? He that is afraid of the weather—can he change it? He says that there will be a long frost—can he shorten it a single day by fretting over it? There is great depression in business and he will be ruined—will he be less likely to be ruined by worrying? Don't you see, then, that your God deserves your trust and that common wisdom bids you be of good courage?

If you are not of good courage, what will happen to you? I will not say that you will be a coward, but I will say that you will look very much like one. I have heard of one who said that he was of a very retiring disposition—he could not take a Sunday school class, or speak a word to anybody for the Master, he was so retiring! I have also heard of a soldier who, in the day of battle, was so very retiring that they shot him as a deserter! I would not have you

deserve the coward's doom and speak of it as, "retiring." No, get not into that class—be you rather like that soldier of Alexander who was always to the front—and the reason was that he bore about with him what was thought to be an incurable disease and he suffered so much pain that he did not care whether he lived or died! Alexander took great pains to have him healed and when he was quite well, he never exposed his precious life to any risk, again! Oh, I would rather that you should be stung into courage by excessive pain than that you should be healed into cowardice! Christ ought not to be served by featherbed soldiers! He deserves that we trust Him and bring ourselves into His service with a courage that cannot be daunted. Though it is upon the pikes of His adversaries, let us find Paradise there, for we shall find it if we follow Christ faithfully to the death! God grant us, then, to be of good courage!

Why are you afraid? Is God with you and yet are you afraid? What ails you? Has God forsaken you? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has Omnipotence grown weak? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has the manna ceased to fall, or the waters to flow? Go, yield yourself up to Him! Ask Him, by His Grace, to make you heroic instead of being numbered among the fearful and the unbelieving who turn their backs in the day of battle and seek their own selfish ease and comfort.

IV. I finish up with A CHEERING PROMISE—"He shall strengthen your heart."

God, alone, can strengthen the heart. I suppose that physicians can do something for weak hearts, though I do not know. As a general rule, when a man dies suddenly and they do not know what it is that killed him, they say, "It is disease of the heart." The heart is a mysterious portion of our being and needs great care. Spiritually, the mercy is that God, who made the heart, understands the heart and He who sees its weakness, knows how to strengthen it!

How does God strengthen men's hearts? Well, sometimes, by gracious Providences. Something very unexpected happens. I have, myself, learned to expect the unexpected. I have known what it is to almost wish on purpose to get into a situation in which there was no way of escape, that I might see the Lord cleave the hills asunder, or divide even the sea to make a way for His people! It is a grand thing to get into such deep water that you cannot touch the bottom and must swim—and then to feel the eternal buoyancy of God's Providence bearing you up! It is grand swimming when there are ten thousand fathoms of ocean below you—there is no fear of knocking your foot against a rock, then, and when you get right out into a simple dependence upon the living God and feel the waves of His eternal influences round about you— then will you be happy and blessed!

The Lord also has a way of strengthening men's hearts by the kindly fellowship of friends. Paul was often much refreshed by Christian associates. The Lord can send someone who, "as iron sharpens iron," may sharpen you and make you ready for service. "A word fitly spoken"—"a word upon wheels," as the Hebrew has it—how good it is when it comes in just

at the right time! It "is like apples of gold in baskets of silver." Such are goodly words brought to us by men of faith and experience whom God sends to us.

So, too, have I known a man's heart to be mightily strengthened by a precious promise. Who knows the wonderful power of a text of Scripture? We used to have, 30 years ago—I do not know whether you have them now—"poor men's plasters" which we used when we felt weak in the back—but a promise out of the Scripture is a poor man's plaster, indeed! What strength it gives to the loins! How we seem to be braced up when we truly lay hold of a promise of God and it really gets a grip upon our spirit!

Beside all that, God the Holy Spirit has a secret way of strengthening the courage of God's people which none of us can explain. Have you ever felt it? You may have gone to your bed, sick at heart, "weary, and worn, and sad," and you wake in the morning ready for anything! Perhaps in the middle of the night you awake and the visitations of God are manifested to you—and you feel as happy as if everything went the way you would like it to go. No, you shall be more happy that everything should cross you than that everything should please you if it is God's sweet will! You feel a sudden strengthening of your spirit, so that you are perfectly resigned, satisfied, prepared and ready. I have known a man of God in a tight spot. Everything has seemed to be going wrong and he has got worried and troubled till he has stepped aside and retired for a little prayer to his God. He has not been absent five minutes yet he has come back feeling, "Now I am ready for you." All the flurry has gone, all the worry has gone—God has revived his spirit and strengthened his heart!

I have seen a good woman when her husband has just died and all her hope has seemed withered. The first burst of grief has passed and she has bowed by the side of that bed, lifted up her heart to God and then has brushed her tears away and given herself up to fight the battle of life for her children—and God has strengthened her heart as in a moment! Oh, do not give up! You need not be cowards! Do not give up. Do not say, "I am beaten. I will always be despondent. My life is crushed." You need not be so! "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart." Get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, pour out your heart before God! Tell your trouble to the Most High and, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, He must and will help those who put their trust in Him! Has he ever failed any who trusted in Him? Who has ever stopped His hand, or withdrawn Him from His designs? Who has ever made Him deny His promise, or retract His word? If you will trust Him, He will be better to you than your fears! No, better to you than your beliefs, or your largest hopes! Stay yourselves upon Him! Lean upon the bosom of eternal Love! Lean hard, lean all your weight there and leave that weight there, and the Lord be with you and bless you! Blessed are all they that trust in the Lord.

How I wish that all here had trusted in the Lord, or that they would seek Him, even now, if they have never yet found Him! The Lord be gracious to each of you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 31.

Verse 1. In You, O LORD, do I put my trust. Can we say as much as that? However else this Psalm of David may end, it strikes a grand keynote, that which should be the first indication of our spiritual life—confidence in God. Here is an ancient weather-beaten saint who, in the very midst of the storm, can say, "In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust." There will the anchor of his soul find a sure hold!

1. Let me never be ashamed. "How can You let me be put to shame after having trusted in You, O my God? I shall be ashamed if You forsake me, if Your promises are not kept to me, O my Lord! Therefore, 'let me never be ashamed.'"

1. Deliver me in Your righteousness. David dares to appeal even to the faithfulness, truth and justice of Jehovah, that He should keep the promise upon which His servant had placed his trust.

2. Bow down Your ear to me. "I am very weak, I am also very unworthy—it will be a great instance of Your Divine condescension if You hear me—yet I cry unto You, 'Bow down Your ear to me.'"

2. Deliver me speedily. We may not set the time for God to answer our petitions, yet may we expect that His sure mercies will be swift mercies when our necessities are very urgent. So the Psalmist pleads, "Lord, come not late to me, lest You come too late to me, for I am in sore distress! My case is urgent, therefore help me now, 'deliver me speedily.'"

2. Be You my strong rock, an house of defense to save me. He remembered Adullam and Engedi and he worked these places into his supplication. A man's prayer should be the index of his life's history. The scenes to which he has been most accustomed should rise up vividly before his spirit when he is at the Throne of Grace. It was so with David—"My God, be You an immutable, immovable, impregnable rock to me and let me dwell in You. Be not merely a refuge for the moment, but be 'a house of defense to save me.'"

3. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name's sake lead me, and guide me. David is of a logical turn of mind. Notice the, "therefore," in this verse. What an amazing, "for," there is here! "Be You my strong rock," "for You are my rock." What God is already, we may ask Him to be! What we believe Him to be by faith, we may ask Him to be in our experience. Observe that David's appeal is not in any degree to his own merit, but, "for Your name's sake"—"because I trust in Your name, and if You do not do as You have said, Your great name will suffer dishonor. How can I believe in Your veracity if You do not do for me according to Your promise and Covenant? 'Therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me.' 'Guide me,' too, even when I do not think of Your Presence. Lead me like a child and guide me like a traveler." There are shades of meaning, here, so that there is no redundancy of expression in the words, "Lead me, and guide me." But even if the two words meant the same, it would be quite lawful for the Psalmist to repeat the prayer, since he felt his need

of leading and guiding to be so great. "Lord, I am so foolish, and the way is so difficult, 'therefore, for Your name's sake, lead me, and guide me.'"

4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength. "Lord, my enemies have entangled me! Before I was aware of it, I was taken in the meshes of their net—will You not pull me out, O Lord? It will need a strong pull, but then, 'You are my strength.' 'Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for You are my strength.'" Sometimes our strength is crippled and we are baffled by the net in which we are enclosed. We feel ourselves hampered. We cannot use the strength we have, but God's strength is always available. There seems to me to be a very blessed turn in the expression here used—"Pull me out of the net: for You are my strength."

5. Into Your hands I commit my spirit. You notice that this Psalm [31] is dedicated to the chief musician. I have studied these Psalms, not only by the hour, and by the day, but sometimes by the month, together. Some of these Psalms have been the pillow for my head at night. Others of them, like wafers made of honey, have lain in my mouth till I have sucked out of them their Divine sweetness. I have often noticed that when one of these sacred songs is dedicated to the chief musician, The Chief Musician generally appears somewhere in the Psalm—He from whom comes all the music that ever makes bleeding hearts, glad, usually shows some traces of Himself within the Psalm itself! In this instance, the living words of David were the dying words of David's Lord—"Into Your hands I commend My spirit." What David did and what the Lord Jesus Christ did, let us do, and do it every day—let us commit our spirit into the hands of our God.

5, 6. You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth, I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD. Men are sure to have some kind of trust or other on which they rely. In David's day some trusted to false gods, others relied upon their own strength. The Psalmist does not speak in soft tones concerning these people, but he says, "I

could not bear them. 'I have hated them that regard lying vanities.' I would not come into their secret, or have any connection with them. I was astonished at them, that they should turn away from God! But as for myself, 'I trust in Jehovah.'" Look how he comes back to the note with which he started—"In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust"—and now he repeats it, "I trust in Jehovah." It is an unfashionable thing—many will not do it—yet David says, "I trust in Jehovah," as if he dared to stand alone and did not mind how singular he seemed to be.

7. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy. What a grand faith! Should there not, sometimes, be the sounding of the cymbals even in the midst of our supplications? Though we must often put on sackcloth, yet we must lift up our song of praise whenever we can—"I will be glad and rejoice"—there shall be a reduplication of my delight—"I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy."

7. For You have considered my trouble. "You did not send it without due consideration. You weighed it and now You look upon me and You study my trouble, You know all about it." You know what is meant by human consideration, but how wonderful must Divine consideration be! When a single glance suffices for Jehovah to know all that is transpiring in the whole universe, what must His consideration be! "You have considered my trouble."

7. You have known my soul in adversities. "When others did not know me, You did. You were familiar with me and sympathetic towards me, especially in the day of adversity. 'You have known my soul.'" God knows His own children even when they are in rags and when their faces are stained with tears, and their spirits are depressed almost to despair—"You have known my soul in adversities."

8. And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy. "No. I may get into the enemy's prison, but there is no bar to it. 'You have not shut me up.' I may seem to get into my enemy's hand, but he cannot shut that hand." Truly, it must be so because David had already put his soul into the hands of God—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit." How, then, could he be shut up in the hands of the enemy?

8. You have set my feet in a large room—

"Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage."

Wherever the child of God is when his faith is in active exercise, his feet are in a large room—by faith he walks at liberty!

9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble. In this short sentence of four words—"I am in trouble"—David gives the text of which the next few verses are a kind of sermon with divisions and subdivisions.

9. My eyes are consumed with grief. "My eyes seem burnt up with scalding tears." The salt of our tears wears out the very strength of our life. "My eyes are consumed with grief."—

9. Yes, my soul and my belly. Or, "body." The inward part of my being seems washed away with the deluge of my tears."

10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing. Better spend them in sighing than in sinning! Yet it is a sad case when we seem to measure our days by the bars of our grief.

10. My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. Now he sees to the bottom of his sorrow—"My strength fails because of my iniquity." We can bear those sorrows which have no connection with our sins, but, alas, where are they to be found? It may be that David's great sin seemed to him to lie at the very root of all his grief.

11. I was a reproach among all my enemies. They had found something to fling at him and they were delighted to throw it with all their malicious force! "I was a reproach among all my enemies"—

11. But especially among my neighbors. Those that are nearest can stab the sharpest. Those who knew David the best endeavored to find some silly tale to use against him.

11. And a fear to my acquaintance: they that did see me outside, fled from me. This Psalm may have been written after Absalom's rebellion, when Shimei cursed the king, and when everybody seemed to be forsaking him. Then was David brought into a low estate, indeed.

12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. This was the same David who slew the Philistine giant! This was the great deliverer of his country, yet the people had forgotten all that. Earthly popularity is the most fleeting thing under Heaven. The world is a hard and cruel master—it forgets its servants when they grow old—it has nothing good to say of them when there is nothing further to be got out of them. So David laments, "I am like a broken vessel"—a potsherd that can hold nothing and is flung away upon a dunghill.

13. For I have heard the slander of many. To have one slanderer attacking your character is bad enough, but to have many such cruel enemies about you—to have a whole brood of Hell's hornets, as it were, stinging you—oh, what misery is this! You who, happily, have never experienced this torture, cannot imagine what agony it causes. I hope you may never know it.

13, 14. Fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD. Here he is back on the old Rock, and rejoicing as his feet stand once more on this firm foundation—"I trusted in you, O Jehovah."

14, 16. I said, You are my God. My times are in Your hand. "My enemies cannot do anything against me without Your permission." Divine Providence is a downy pillow for an aching head, a blessed salve for the sharpest pain. He who can feel that his times are in the hand of God need not tremble at anything that is in the hand of man!

15, 16. Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant: save me for Your mercies' sake. "If Your face shines upon me, Lord, they may look as black as they please. If You will but deliver me, I care not how cruelly they persecute me. If You will save me, who can destroy me?" O you who are in trouble at this time, hasten to your God! Where should the little bird fly when pursued by the hawk, but to its shelter in the rock? Where can you go, O sheep of Christ's flock, but to your Shepherd?

17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. There is something of the harshness of the old dispensation about that prayer, so we will turn it into a prophecy and say, "The wicked shall be ashamed—they shall be silent in the grave."

18. 19. Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh how great is Your goodness which You have laid up for them that fear You. Is not that a blessed expression to be used by the man who said that his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing?

19. Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men! Not only has the Lord abundant goodness stored up for His children, but His goodness is brought out for others to see and for His people to feed upon even in the presence of their enemies!

20. You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. They shall not be wounded by all the malice of their adversaries—they shall be preserved in the King's royal pavilion.

21-23. Blessed be the LORD for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the LORD, all you His saints. See what a fountain of happiness there is in the Psalmist's heart? He longs for all the saints to love the

Lord!

23, 24. For the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD. In this Psalm we have heard the wail of the sackbut and the clashing of the cymbals—but we finish with the blast of the silver trumpets!