

Fathomless

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"Your judgments are a great deep." [Psalm 36:6](#).

CONSIDER the word, "judgment," in whatever light you please, this sentence is true. There is much of mystery connected with the terrible calamities which afflict the earth, devastate nations, destroy cities and sweep away the relics of the past. There is much of mystery about the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life—how they prosper for awhile and are suddenly cut down—how they grow fat like oxen and then are taken away to the shambles. The judgments of God regarding the wicked in the world to come are also "a great deep," not to be spoken of with levity. A solemn subject is that of the future punishment of the ungodly—"a great deep," a deep where some, I am afraid, speculate so deeply that the risk they run is imminent—they may drown themselves in Hell.

But I prefer tonight to take the text as it may refer to God's dealings with His own people. He deals with them in judgment, not, I think, penally, vindicating the inflexible justice of the Law by the terrible vengeance He inflicts on the transgressor as He will deal with the wicked at the last dread assize. I mean not that. I rather interpret it of the salutary discipline and painful chastisements of God's hand which are called "judgments" in Scripture. They do not come by chance, nor upon us at all merely as a matter of sovereignty, but they are sent in wisdom, because God judges them to be necessary. They are weighed out to us with discretion—given to us by prudence. It is a sweet name, I think, for affliction—not that I look upon affliction as a judgment upon me for sin, which I cannot do, now that I have seen sin punished in Christ, but I look at my afflictions as being sent to me according to the all-wise judgment of a kind Father, not at all without consideration, but always according to His Infinite wisdom and prudence, dealt out in measure and at proper times, according to the Infinite judgment and wisdom of God. In a word, they are called, "judgments," not because they are judicial, but because they are judicious!

Now, these dealings of God with His servants, always wise and prudent, are frequently like great deeps. This evening I shall simply work out three or four thoughts which arise out of that metaphor.

I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE.

We cannot discover the foundation or cause and spring of them. Some of God's servants who are earnestly desirous to provide things honest in the sight of all men, though they are industrious and energetic and use proper prudence, do not find themselves able to prosper in trade. They are thwarted in all their purposes. There seems to be a kind of fatality connec-

ted with all their enterprises. If they do but touch a business or a bargain which will turn into gold with the traffic of others, it melts under their hand into dross. Now, it is not always that this can be explained. "Your judgments are a great deep"—a matter to be perceived as a fact, but not to be explained by reasoning.

Sometimes in a family a dear child is born and is a great comfort to its parents. It seems, indeed, to be sent in love, to heal some old wound and to make the house happy! And then just as suddenly as it came, it is removed. Why? Ah, here, again, is another deep which a mother's anxious heart would like to fathom, but which it is not for her to explore. It is a great deep.

Children will be spared to us and just when they are ripening to manhood and womanhood, and we hope to see them settled and established in life, it happens—as it happened to one of our beloved friends in this Church this afternoon— that we have to stand at the open grave, and say, "Earth to earth, dust to dust." Why God takes away the holy and the good, the amiable and the lovely when they appeared to be most useful, we cannot understand. It is a great deep.

Oftentimes, too, it happens that when a man is surrounded by his family and all his household are dependent upon his exertions with a business just beginning to prosper, while he bids fair to live for many years, he is cut down as in a moment—his wife is left a widow—his children are orphans. He seems to be taken away at the very worst time, just when he could least be spared. The anxious wife may say to herself, "Why is this?" but she can only say in return, "I cannot comprehend it, it is a great deep."

I might thus go on recounting instances, but they have transpired before us all in our lifetime. And if they have not occurred to us yet, they certainly will. Trials and troubles will come upon us quite beyond our measuring line. We shall have to do business in deep waters where no plummet can by possibility find a bottom! "Your judgments are a great deep."

But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? I answer, Because He is the Lord. Your child must not expect to understand all his father does, because his father is a man of ripened intellect and understanding, and the child is but a child. You, dear Brother, however experienced you may be, are but a child and, compared with the Divine mind, what intelligence have you? How can you expect, therefore, that God shall always act upon a rule which you shall be able to understand? He is God and, therefore, it becomes us oftentimes to be dumb, to sit in silence and feel and know it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so.

God sends us trials of this sort for the exercise of our Divine Graces. Now, is there room for faith? When you can trace it, you cannot trust it. If you can understand all that He does, there is room, then, for your judgment rather than for your faith and for your reliance on His judgment. But when you cannot understand it, submit yourself to Him! Say, "I know

that God is good. Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though I walk in darkness and see no light, yet shall not an unbelieving word cross these lips, for He is good and must be good, become of me what may." Oh, then it is that faith is faith, indeed—the faith that brings glory to God and strength to your soul! Here is room, too, for humility. Knowledge puffs up, but the feeling that everything is beyond our knowledge, that we are nonplussed and cannot under-stand—the sense of ignorance and incapacity to understand the dealings of God—brings humility to us and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah's Throne. Beloved, I think there is hardly a Grace which the Christian has which is not much helped by the deeps of God's judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, "No, I will not ask the reason—I will not desire the reason—I do so love Him! Let His will stand for a reason. That shall be enough for me. It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him." We love not those whom we are always bringing to book and questioning about all they do, but when love comes to perfection it admires all, it believes all to be right and to be perfect. And so, when love comes to perfection with reference to the most perfect God, then it is that everything that is done is endorsed without examination—everything, even though it is shrouded in darkness—is believed in without a question. It must be right, for You, Lord, have done it!

Many other reasons why God calls His people thus to feel His judgments occur to me. One I may give, then I will leave this point. We have sins which we cannot fathom, dear Brothers and Sisters, and it is little marvel, therefore, if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom! There are depths of depravity within our heart that call for other deeps, as deep calls unto deep, and there are consequences of sin within us which we are not able yet to reach, consequences that are following us in secret and damaging us in very vital point. It needs that the medicine should be of a searching kind to follow the disease into the recesses of our soul where understanding cannot pry. Some of those deep judgments are like secret, potent, subtle medicines, searching out certain secret devils that have found their way into the caverns of our spirit and hidden there. Perhaps an affliction which I can understand is meant to direct my attention to some known sin— but it may be that the trial which I cannot understand is dealing deadly blows against a mortal ill, which, if not thus destroyed, might have been solemnly prejudicial to my own spirit.

I leave that thought with you—expect that God's judgments will sometimes be unfathomable. In the next place—if God's judgments are a great deep—

II. THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING.

Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. Children, perhaps, may fancy that a shallow sea is the safest, but an old sailor knows better. While they are off the Irish coast the captain has to keep a good look out, but while he is crossing the Atlantic he is in far less danger. There he has plenty of room and there is no fear of quicksands or of shoals. When

the sailor begins to come up the Thames, then it is that there is first one sandbank and then another, and he is in

danger, but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So, mark you, in the judgments of God. When he is dealing out affliction to us, it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. "What?" says one, "trial safe?" Yes, very safe. The safest part of a Christian's life is the time of his trial. "What? When a man is down, do you say he is safe?" "Yes, for then he need fear no fall! When he is low, he need fear no pride. When he is humbled under God's hand, then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. Smooth water on the way to Heaven is always a sign that the soul should keep wide awake, for danger is near! One comes at last to feel a solemn dread creeping over one in times of prosperity. "You shall fear and tremble because of all the good that God shall make to pass before you," fearing not so much lest the good should depart as lest we should make an ill use of it and should have a canker of sloth, or self-confidence, or worldliness growing up in our spirits! We have seen many professed Christians who have made shipwreck—in some few instances it has been attributable to overwhelming sorrow—but in ten cases to the one, it has been attributable to prosperity! Men grow rich and, of course, they do not attend the little Chapel they once went to—they must go somewhere where a fashionable world will worship! Men grow rich and immediately they cannot keep to that road of self-denial which once they so gladly trod. The world has got into their hearts and they need to get more. They have got so much and they must get more! An insatiable ambition has come over them—and they fall—and great is the sorrow which their fall brings to the Church! Great the mischief which it does to the people of God!

But a man in trouble—did you ever notice a real child of God in trial? How he prays! He cannot live without prayer! He has got a burden to carry to his God and he goes to the Mercy Seat again and again. Notice him under depression of spirits. How he reads his Bible! He does not now care for that lighter literature which beguiled him many an hour before. He needs the solid promise, the strong meat of the Kingdom of God! Do you notice now how he hears? That man does not care a fig for your flowers and your fine bits of rhetoric—he needs the Word of God! He needs the naked Doctrine. He needs Christ! He cannot be fed on whims and fancies. He cares a great deal less about theological speculation and ecclesiastical authority—he needs to know something about eternal love, everlasting faithfulness and the dealings of the Lord of Hosts with the souls of His people, of the Covenant and of the suretyship engagements of Christ! Ah, this is the man who, if you notice him, walks tenderly in the world. He walks holding the world with a very loose hand. He expects to be often in the way, and hopes to be up out of the way, for the world has lost its attraction for him!

I say again, God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing and, under the guidance and Presence of the Holy Spirit, they are not only safe but they are advantageous.

I greatly question whether we ever grow much in Grace, except when we are in the furnace! We ought to do so. The joys of this life with which God blesses us ought to make us increase in Grace and gratitude, ought to be a sufficient motive for the very highest form of consecration, but, as a rule, we are only driven to Christ by a storm—the most of us, I mean. There are blessed and favored exceptions, but most of us need the rod, must have it and do not seem to learn obedience except through chastening—the chastening of the Lord! Here I leave that second thought. Thirdly, God's judgments are a great deep— III. BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE.

Down in those great depths, who knows what there may be? Pearls lie deep there—masses of precious things that would make the miser's eyes gleam like a star. There are the wrecks of old Spanish galleons lost these centuries ago and there they lie, huge mines of wealth, but far down deep! And so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness and what David calls, "very tenderness," "for in very tenderness," he says, "have You afflicted me." There is as much wisdom to be seen in some of the deep afflictions of God—if we could but understand them, we would see as much wisdom in them as in the creation of the world! God smites His people artistically. There is never a random blow. There is a marvelous degree of skill in the chastening of the Lord. Hence we are told not to despise it, which, in the strongest meaning of it, means that we are to honor it! We honor the chastisements of our parents, but infinitely more the chastisements of God. "For they verily chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure, but He for our profit," and there is a way of chastening us for profit.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I said there were treasures concealed in the great deeps which we cannot yet reach, and so in the great deeps in which God makes us to do business there are great treasures that we cannot come upon at present. We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive, the present and immediate benefit of some of our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit—the benefit may be for hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The affliction of today may have no reference to the circumstances of today, but to the circumstances of 50 years ahead! I do not know that that blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. There are certain marks that an artist makes upon the block that you cannot see the reason of as yet—and they spoil the apparent likeness of the block and marble to the image which you know he wishes to produce—but then those lines are to be worked out, by-and-by! They are scratches now, but they will be lines of beauty soon, when he comes to finish them. So, a present trial may even lame us for present service, damage us—I will even go the length of saying—for years to come and make us go groaning and brokenhearted, so as to be of

comparatively little service to the Church and of very little joy to ourselves. But then afterwards—afterwards as Paul puts it—it bears the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those that are exercised thereby. Why will you not let the Lord have time? Why will you be in a hurry? Why will you stand at His elbow and perpetually say, "Explain this today and show me the motive and reason of this in this present hour"? A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night! The mighty God takes mighty time in which to work out His grand results! Therefore, be content to let the treasures lie at the bottom of the deep for awhile. But then faith may see them. Faith can make the deep translucent till it sees the treasure lying there—and it is yours and though you may not at this hour be able to be at it—yet you shall have it, "for all things are yours." Everything that is stored up in the great deep of the Eternal Purpose, or in the deep of the manifest judgment, everything there belongs to you, O, Believer! Therefore rejoice in it and let it lie there till such a time as God may choose to raise it for your spiritual enrichment. God's judgments are a great deep—

IV. AND THEY WORK MUCH GOOD.

The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste—a salt and barren wilderness—is one of the greatest blessings to this round world! If, tomorrow, there should be "no more sea," although that may one day be a blessing, it would not be so today, but the greatest of all curses! It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by-and-bye in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the world—I might say the circulating blood of the world! We must have it. It must be in motion. Its tides, like a great pulse, must be felt, or the world's vitality would cease. There is no waste in the sea—it is all needed. It must be there. There is not a drop of it too much. So with our afflictions which are Your judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul's health, to our spiritual vigor. "By all these," said one of old, "do men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit." Rising up from my trouble is the constant mist which is afterwards transformed into sacred dew, which moistens my life. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," said David. "Amen!" say all the afflicted ones. A thousand sick beds shall bear witness to the blessedness of the trial. A thousand losses and crosses that have been borne by the faithful now help the sweetness of the harmony of everlasting hymns in the land of the blessed. "Oh, blessed cross," said one, "I fear lest I should come to love you too much! 'Tis so good to be afflicted!" May God grant to us that at all times, instead of trying to fathom the deep, we may understand that it is useful to us and be content. Lastly, if God's judgments are a great deep—

V. THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples—that nations were kept asunder by the sea. But lo, the sea is today the great highway of the world! The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they soon flash across

the waves. The sea is the world's great canal—a mighty channel of communication. And so, Brothers and Sisters, our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could! They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of His wonders in the deep—but if you are made to put out far to sea, where deep calls unto deep and the noise of God's waterspouts astounds the spiritual mariner, then it is that you shall see God's wonders—wonders of faithfulness, wonders of power, wonders of wisdom, wonders of love! You shall see them and you shall rejoice to see them! These troubles shall be as fiery chariots to bear you up to God. Your afflictions, wave upon wave, shall wash your soul, like a tempest-tossed boat, nearer to the haven. Oh, but this is a blessed thing when God's judgments bring us nearer to Him! Old Quarles has a quaint idea when he represents God as swinging

a flail in judgment—he says if you would get away from it, you must get close to His hands, and then you are out of the reach of the swing of the blow. Get close up to God and He will not smite! Get near to God and the trials cease!

You know, trials are sometimes weights to keep men down, but you have seen many a machine in which one weight going down lifts another weight up. And there is a way by faith of adjusting the consecrated pulleys so that the very weights of your affliction may lift you up nearer to God! The bird with a string and a stone to its feet cannot fly and yet there is a way that God has of making His birds fly even when they are tied to the ground! They never mounted till they had something to pull them down! Never ascended till they were compelled to descend! They found the gates of Heaven not up there, but down here! The lower they sank in self-estimation, the nearer they came to the everlasting God who is the foundation of all things!

Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I have brought you to the last thought—may the Holy Spirit bring you to make it your own. May God's deep judgments lead you to deeper communion.

Dear child of God, you that are in trouble tonight, the voice of that trouble is to you—get nearer to God! Get nearer to God. God has favored you, favored you with an extraordinary means of growth in His Grace. To use Rutherford's simile, He has put you down in the wine cellar in the dark. Now begin to try the wines on the lees well-refined. Now get at the choice treasures of darkness! He has brought you on to a sandy desert—now begin to seek the treasures that are hid in the sand. Believe that the deepest afflictions are neighbors always to the highest joys and that the greatest possible privileges lie close by the darkest trials. If the bitterer your sorrow, the louder your song at the last—there is a reason for that—and that reason faith may discover and experience live upon.

May God bless the tried ones here! But there are some here, perhaps, who are in trial and have no God to go to. Poor souls! Poor souls! Poverty and no God! Sickness and no

God! A life of toil, and no Heaven! A slavery of penury on earth and then driven forever away from God's Presence! Oh, how pitiable! How pitiable! Pity yourselves and remember that it need not always be so. You may have a Heaven, you may have present bliss. Here is the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, if you can but trust Him who bled upon the Cross, you shall have comfort for your present trouble! You shall have pardon for your past, present and future sins! The Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALMS 73; 37:1-10.

TITLE, "A PSALM OF ASAPH." He was a great singer, but he could not always sing. In the first part of the Psalm he felt rather like groaning than singing—and you shall find that those who sing the sweetest the praises of God sometimes have to hang their harps upon the willows and are silent. The strong temptation through which Asaph passed is one which is very common. You find another account of it in the 37th Psalm. It may help your memory to notice that it is the 37th and the 73rd Psalm (transpose the figures) which are both upon the same subject—the temptation caused to the people of God by the prosperity of the wicked.

Verse 1. Truly, God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart It must be so. Whatever argument my soul may hold about it, I will set that down, to begin with as a certainty—"Truly, God is good to Israel." He cannot be unkind or unfaithful to His own people! It cannot be possible, after all—however things may look—that God is a bad God and a bad Master to His own servants!

2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped. Am I, then, one of His people or not? I know He is good to them, but how about myself? Perhaps some here will never question themselves in that way, and if they were led to do so, they would think it was of the devil. I do not think so. I think it is rather of the devil to keep us from questioning ourselves. I remember what Cowper said—

"He that has ne ver doubted of his state, He may—perhaps he may—too late." Let us delight in full assurance, but let us keep very clear of presumption and that assurance which cannot bear self-examination is presumption, depend upon it! When a man declines to search himself and test himself, there is something

doubtful, if not rotten in his estate—and it is time he began to say, "As for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well near slipped." This is how it came about—

3. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked I know that wicked men are fools. Asaph and David had often said that before. Yet says he, "I was a greater fool, still, that I was envious of these fools—when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

4, 5. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Many of them keep up a hypocritical profession through a long life and die in a stupefaction—so that conscience never

awakens and they pass out of the world loaded with guilt—and yet talk about being accepted before God! How can this be? Where is the justice of it?

6. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain. As kings wear chains of gold, so is their pride to them.

6. Violence covers them as a garment They are not ashamed of it. They get to be so bold in sin that they wear it as an outside cloak!

7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish Superfluities! They never have to ask where a meal will come from. They have more than they need.

8. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens. Such big mouths—such blasphemous words—have they, that they attack God Himself! There is nothing too high for them to drag it down—nothing too pure for them to slander. "They set their mouth against the heavens."

9. And their tongue walks through the earth. Like the lion seeking its prey, they take long walks in their slander. Nobody is safe from them.

10. 11. Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? God's sorrowing children have to drink of the bitter cup while these proud ones are eating of the fat of the land!

12-14. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the daylong have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. When Asaph got into this unbelieving state of mind, it looked as if all his care of his character and all his desire to serve God were wasted, for the wicked prospered, while he was chastened! It is a strong description which he gives of his state. "All the daylong have I been plagued." Not by the half-hour, but by the whole day—plagued and weeping as soon as he was out of bed—chastened every morning! He almost seemed to be sorry that he was a child of God, to be so roughly handled. He almost, but not quite, wished that he could take the portion of the wicked, that he might enjoy himself as they did and might prosper in the world as they did.

15. If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have offended against the generation of Your children. That was very wise of Asaph. He thought, but he did not speak. Some persons say, "You may as well out with it." You may as well keep it in! No, a great deal better—if you have it in your own heart, it will grieve yourself—but if you speak it out, you will grieve others. If you wear sackcloth, Brothers and Sisters, wear it round your own loins, but do not wear it as your outside garment. There is enough sackcloth in the world without your flaunting it before everybody else's face! If you must fast, remember your Master's words, "You, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." He gave us that precept in order to avoid Pharisaic ostentation, but we may also follow it from another motive, namely, that we may not spread sorrow in the world.

There is enough of depression of spirit, enough of despondency, enough of heartbreak without our saying a word to increase it among the sons of men—

"Bear and forbear, and silent be— Tell no man your misery,"

lest you bring another into it, unless, indeed, you meet with a strong man who can help you. Then you may tell your sorrow to get relief. But tell it not to the children.

16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. "Too painful" to keep it. "Too painful" to speak it out and grieve other people.

17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood their end. Asaph went to his God. He got to Christ, whom he foresaw, for the Person of Jesus Christ is the sanctuary of God! Some people call these buildings sanctuaries. They have no authority for so doing. "God dwells not in temples made with hands." He may have done so under the Old

Covenant, but not now. Christ is the sanctuary of God and when we get to Him and come into fellowship with God in Him, then we begin to learn something! "Then understood I their end."

18. Surely You did set them in slippery places. There they are—on a mountain of ice, bright and glittering! Up aloft, where others see, admire and wonder at them. But oh, how dangerous their pathway!

18. You cast them down into destruction. They are not left to slip, but a hand overthrows them—flings them down from the heights of their prosperity to the depths of unutterable woe!

19, 20. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. As if God slept today and let these images of prosperity exist as in a dream, but by-and-by He wakes. His time of judgment comes and where are these prosperous men? They have gone. The "baseless fabric of a vision" has melted into thin air and "left not a wreck behind." It is not. It is gone!

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. I felt a heart-pain. I felt my whole nature go amiss, as if there had been calculi causing the deepest possible misery in my reins.

22. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. I saw no farther than a goose! Like a beast that cannot look into the future, I judged these men by today—by the pastures in which they fed and the fatness which they gathered there. "I was as a beast before You." Now notice the splendid connection of these two verses. I will read them again—the 22nd and the 23rd. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You."

23. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. What a strange mixture a man is! And a godly man is the strangest conglomerate of all! He is a beast and yet continually with God. View him from one side—he is ignorant. View him from the other and he has an unction from the Holy One and he knows all things! View

him from one point of the compass and he is naked, and poor, and miserable! View him from another quarter and behold he is complete in Christ and "accepted in the Beloved!" They know not man who do not know that every true man is two men!

24. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. I, the fool that envied fools, yet, "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."

25. Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. Now he has got out of the temptation! He is not going to seek for prosperity that he may rival the wicked in their wealth. No! He sees that in having God, he has all he needs. Even though he should continually be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, his portion in God is quite enough for him. He will not murmur anymore!

26. My flesh and my heart fails. I see what a poor thing I am. I allowed my flesh and my heart to get the mastery over me and I got caught in this trap.

26, 27. But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You. A strong word, but none too forcible, for every heart that seeks delight away from God is an unchaste heart. It has got away from true purity even for a moment in pouring out its love upon the creature.

28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.

PSALM 37. Verse 1. Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. A common temptation. Many of God's saints have suffered from it. Learn from their experience. Avoid this danger. There really is no power in it when once the heart has come to rest in God. But it is a sad affliction until the heart does get its rest. "Fret not because of evildoers."

2-4. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD. Make Him your delight, and take care that you do really delight. Feel a fullness of joy in Him.

4. And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Because when the heart delights in God, then its desires are all such as God can safely grant. He does not say to every man, or even to every praying man, "I will give you the desires of your heart," but, "Delight yourself in the Lord," and then He will.

5. Commit your way unto the LORD. Give it up to Him to rule it, and to guide you and lead you in every step. "Commit your way unto the Lord."

5, 6. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. It is better to trust our character with God than with the ablest counselor. Scandal may pass over a fair name for a while

and cloud it, but God is the avenger of all the righteous! There will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons at the Last Great Day. Only we must commit it to God.

7, 8. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil. A fretful spirit soon comes to be an angry spirit—and when we begin to be jealous of evildoers, we are very apt to become evildoers ourselves! Many an honest man has snatched at hasty gain because he was envious of the prosperity of the unrighteous. And then he has pierced himself through with many sorrows in consequence. But "fret not yourself in any wise to do evil." There is an old proverb that it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. Therefore, when you are in temporal trouble, ask the Lord to fill you with His Grace, for then you will stand upright and, by-and-by, you shall be delivered.

9. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. If there is anything good to be had here, men that wait upon God shall have it! If there is any grain of wheat amidst these heaps of chaff, Believers that are trusting the Lord shall find them!

10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be. How transient are their joys! Their wealth which they accumulate, the beauty which they think is upon their estate—all this is but as the painted colors of the bubble, which is scarcely seen before it vanishes. Will you envy this? Will you envy a little child his playthings, which will be broken in an hour? Will you envy a madman the straw crown which he plaits and puts upon his head when he thinks himself a king? Oh, be not so foolish! Your inheritance is eternal and you are immortal! Why should you envy the creature of an hour? "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be."

10. Yes, you shall diligently consider his place. His mansion, his house, the grand figure that he cut in society.