OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY

PSALMS

In Luke 24:44 our Lord refers to what is written "**in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms**" concerning Himself. This is an authoritative division of the Old Testament,

- By the law of Moses is meant the Pentateuch, or Fivefold Book.
- The prophets include not only the prophetic writings, but also Joshua, Judges, the Samuels and Kings.
- The remaining books are the Holy Writings (Hagiographa), and receive the name of Psalms because this book stands, in the Hebrew Bible, at the head of the division.

The Hebrew title to this precious Scripture is Praises, or the Book of Praises, a title which designates the main object of the book, viz., the worship of God. Our word Psalms is the anglicized form of the Greek name for the book, a word which seems to involve the idea of instrumental accompaniment in the rendition of these inspired lyrics in the worship of God. The early Christian fathers called it, The Psalter.

The book of Psalms has evidently a peculiar character. It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. These are in the Psalms, it is true, but only in a subordinate way. History, prophecy, providence, doctrine and law are all here, but these form nothing more than the frame around which the Spirit of God has built the praise, prayer, and adoration of the Lord's people.

"The first three Psalms are keys to the whole collection; the themes are the Scriptures, the Messiah, and the believer's experience." Worship, in its broadest application, is the central idea of the Psalter. Many of the Psalms, in whole or in part, are prayers—intercessions for the psalmist himself and for those of a like precious faith with himself, for the Lord's cause in the earth, and for the reign of righteousness and peace. Many of them express deep and poignant sorrow for sin, and plead for pardon. Many of them are descriptive of the godly man, of his character, ways, afflictions, and deliverances. Others are didactic and predictive. And others pour forth the fervid praises of a glad and happy heart. But all of them are worship.

They carry the worshiper directly into the divine presence, and deal with all that is in him and belongs to him as before God. Of the book as a whole the following points may be noted:

1. *The Psalms are preeminently devotional*.

- They exhale the very spirit of worship,
- They breathe the atmosphere of devotion.
- They magnify and praise the Lord,
- They ascribe to Him the majesty and glory which are due to Him alone.
- They exalt His attributes, His name, His word, His providence, and His presence in all the affairs of the world.

All that comes into the life of the saint they refer to Him. The difficulties, perils, temptations, enemies, sorrows, joys, in short, all the vast experiences of God's people are brought into His presence, are ascribed to Him.

The Psalms, unlike the sentiments of most in our day, never stop short with second causes—with the laws and forces of nature, as if everything here were tied up in the environment, as men call it—they go beyond these, to God Himself, and to that infinite Source who is present in all the works of His hands, they attribute whatever happens to the believer. The heart of the worshiper ever turns to Him.

Very significant is the frequent exhortation to "**lift up**" the heart or the soul to God. Worship, the devotion of the heart, is a prominent feature of the Psalms.

2. *The Psalms are remarkably fruitful of experience.*

It would almost seem as if the Spirit of God had gathered into these one hundred and fifty lyrics all the varied exercises of soul of which the redeemed have knowledge in the world. There is no state or exigency, no circumstance or set of circumstances of what nature soever, prosperous and adverse, bad and good, near and remote, but it may find a faithful expression in this inimitable book.

Here is mirrored all that the saint desires and seeks, loves and hates. His hopes, fears, confidence, weaknesses, strength, triumph and failure are here. Here, too, are his temptations and trials, his conflicts with foes both within and without, his defeats and his victories. In short, the life of the believer, with its intricate mazes, its vast alterations, is here laid bare.

No doubt the human experiences recorded in the Psalms have a basis in the history of those who were their authors; but not all of them. There are not a few in which no human experience finds any counterpart. We must look to the Lord Jesus Christ to find any adequate expression for them. Nevertheless, most of those written by David sprang from his own personal experience, and this fact explains why his life should have had such a wonderful range. He was called to write, by the inspiration of the Spirit, songs that would go to the heart of universal man, and so his life ran up and down through the entire gamut of human emotions.

It is the same, in degree, with the other Psalms not belonging to David. They are all the products of the inner life, "openings to the light of day from the strong hidden currents which have been flowing underneath."

3. *But there is much more*.

The Psalms are full of Christ. They speak of His humiliation and exaltation, of His rejection by the world and of His final triumph over all opposition. But they go deeper, as we may say; deeper even than the gospels; they let us into His thoughts and feelings when the billows of wrath were rolling over Him, when the heavy cloud of judgment which was all our own burst upon His devoted head.

Such particularly are the Twenty-second and the Sixty-ninth.

4. *Authors of the Psalms*.

At the head of the list, of course, stands David, the poet-king, and prophet, Acts 2:30. He was naturally most gifted, possessed in a very high degree that rarest of endowments, a poetic genius. Far beyond all this, he enjoyed the inspiration of the Spirit, II Samuel 23:2. Besides, David stood in a peculiar relation to God, was a man after His own heart, I Samuel 13:14.

In the historical books of the Old Testament it is not easy to see how David's character comports with this remarkable testimony; but in the Psalms we put our finger on the beating of his heart-pulse, and feel the very throbbings and movements of his soul. Preeminently he was the friend of God.

Seventy-three are by David, fifty are anonymous, and it is thought by many that some of them were composed by him likewise. Moses is declared to be the author of the Ninetieth. All the internal evidences corroborate the heading. It is emphatically a wilderness and pilgrim song, a true "Psalm of Life."

To Solomon two are ascribed, the Seventy-second and the One hundred and twenty-seventh. The latter is a temple song; the former closes with "**The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended**," words that seem to suggest a Davidic authorship. The meaning is, that, when the predictions of the Psalms are fulfilled, the grand objects for which David prayed will then be realized. Asaph, Jeduthun (or Ethan), and the sons of Korah were probably the authors of those which bear their names.

5. *The collection and arrangement of the Psalter*.

It is very generally believed that David arranged those existing at his time. We infer this from his careful ordering the service of song in the worship of the sanctuary, I Chronicles 25. Probably Ezra collected and arranged the book as we now have it. The principle by which he was guided was not that of chronology, or the respective ages of the various Psalms, but the "Succession of thought," and the two great names of God, as we shall presently see.

6. The inscriptions are worthy of note, though so ancient that their meaning was only partially known when the Septuagint version was made [nearly three centuries before Christ]; at least some of them are not translated.

- Michtam is a golden,
- Maschil a didactic Psalm.
- Selah is thought by many to be a musical sign of some sort (If so, then Habakkuk 3 was intended to be musically rendered, for it is found there).

It is always connected with some striking passage, is a kind of index finger, as if saying, "Pause and consider." Jerome says that the words with which Selah stands are of eternal moment. The significance of the other headings is only conjectural. Two translations of the Sept., however, are suggestive:—Psalm 22: (To the chief musician upon Aijeleth—Shahar," i. e., "The hind of the morning;" an allusion to the plaint of the Messiah compassed about by baying dogs, like the hunted hind. Psalm 56: "The silent dove in far-off lands," in allusion perhaps to David's exile life.

7. *The book is divided into five parts, each division being marked by a doxology.*

Some have seen in the Psalter the image of the Pentateuch. Delitzsch calls it "the congregation's five-fold word to the Lord, even as the Thorah [the Law] is the Lord's five-fold word to the congregation."

The One hundred and fiftieth is the doxology of the fifth book, and of the entire collection. It begins with the noble word Hallelujah, and ends with it, and in every verse lying between, it is found. The Psalm has the same number of verses as the first, but how different the two and how much lies between them. Through struggle and conflict, defeat and victory, the people and cause of God have pressed on, and now at length His vast purposes find their fulfillment, and everything that hath breath is summoned to praise Him. It is the climax, the finale of all toward which He has been working and moving through the past ages and dispensations, and the goal is now reached; and so the magnificent shout of a redeemed creation is Hallelujah.

8. *Variation of the divine names in the Psalms.*

Reference is made more particularly to the two great titles by which the Supreme Being is commonly designated in the Old Testament, viz., Lord and God (*Elohim*). The use of these two divine names in the Psalter is very noticeable and interesting.

- In book first, Psalm 1-41, Lord occurs about 277 times, and God (Elohim) only about forty-seven times.
- In book second, Psalm 43-72, the order is reversed, God being found some 194 times, and Lord only some twenty-seven times.
- Book Third, 48-89, employs them with approximate uniformity, or to speak a little more accurately, the book is made up of about fifty-seven Elohim (God) and forty-six Lord Psalms.

- The title of God is found much more frequently in the first half than in the last; and conversely, Lord less in the first than in the last half, i. e., Psalm 73-82 have God about forty times, and Lord only about ten times; while in 83-89 God occurs seventeen, and Lord thirty-three times.
- In the fourth and fifth books the name God recedes more and more, being found about forty times, while Lord comes into remarkable prominence, occurring nearly 380 times. (Note: Psalm 108 is made up of two Psalms from the second book).

The Spirit uses these divine names, not at random as men so often do, but always with an intelligent purpose, whether we be able to discover His design or not. It is believed God is the wider title, the more general name, and designates Him as the Creator, Governor and Judge of all; Lord as the self-existent One who stands in covenant relationship with His people. In Genesis 1 it is God who creates; while it is the Lord who makes the covenant with Abraham and with Israel in Genesis 12. God refers to His natural attributes (His power, wisdom, etc.), whereas the Lord (while not excluding the other) refers more especially to His moral attributes (holiness, mercy, etc.) (Forbes).

Let it be carefully observed that the Psalms are arranged according to these great names of God, and not according to the dates of their composition at all. Some of the oldest are toward the end of the collection, as that ascribed to Moses which is numbered as the 90th, and the 145th is David's, while some that are supposed to have been written about the time of the Babylonian exile are nearly in the middle of the book. Chronology, therefore, had no place in the arrangement of the Psalms.

The divine names are the key to their order. This appears from the 32d and 51st, both of which relate to the sin of David. The 32d is in the first book and has the title, Lord, throughout, for it is the joy of forgiveness and restoration of divine favor which are there celebrated; whereas in the 51st, where the awful crime is so touchingly confessed, the name is God exclusively, save in verse 15, which has Lord (Adonai), Master. And yet in the order of time the 51st takes the precedence, for pardon follows confession; but the 51st is in the second book. Why are they placed thus? The explanation seems to be this: In the 51st David recognizes that his sin has in reality interrupted the covenant relation he sustains to God, that it is a virtual breach of it, and hence he does not appeal to the Lord, but to God, the Judge and Governor, who stands at a distance from the sinner, ready, as we may say, to hear his confession, judge his sin, and restore him to favor; but in the 32d he joyfully reclaims the covenant relation, re-enters into communion with his Redeemer, and hence the Lord is the great title of his address.

The Psalter gives evidence of what we may call structural inspiration. It is firmly believed that none other but the Spirit of God arranged these Psalms as we now have them; and that there is a profound meaning in their order.

The whole book is a sort of mirror of God's ways with His people, and with the world.

- In the first book Israel is in the covenant relation with God, and therefore the covenant name, LORD, is prominent;
- In the second, the people have fallen from their first love, have gone into apostasy and unbelief, and God takes the pre-eminence, God, the Judge and the Governor;

- In the third, they are viewed as returning to their allegiance, under the loving and faithful dealing of God, as He is revealed to them in the double name of God and Lord;
- While in the remaining books, Israel, according to all the prophets and Paul in the 11th of the Romans, is brought again and finally into full favor and fellowship, and all the earth rejoices in the fullness of redemption, and the great Hallelujah Chorus is sung.

Like some majestic oratorio, some sublime symphony, is this book of Psalms, with the theme sometimes receding, then again advancing, now in the minor, then in the major, and anon in the chromatic scales, struggling through difficulties, triumphing over obstacles; steadily moving forward to the climax when all the voices and all the instruments, the parts and the chorus unite and combine in the final and overwhelming Hallelujah.

One can hardly doubt but that the close of the Psalter celebrates the glorious time when the voices of angels, redeemed men, and every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, will join in the thrilling anthem, "**Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, Amen**"—Hallelujah, Revelation 5:11-14.

The book of Psalms, it is firmly believed, is prophetic. The Spirit of God has ordered these His songs in the way He has, that the believer might here, as in so much else of Holy Scripture, have the assurance of the blessed outcome of God's ways with the world.

But there is progress in the book likewise. The first and second books give us David's experience, and God's dealings with him. But we do not stop with doctrine and discipline as an ultimate attainment. And so the other books go on, rising higher and higher until they culminate in the exultant burst of jubilant praise of the Hallelujah Psalms at the close.

The Songs of Degrees, or Ascents, Psalm 120-134, were probably sung by the caravan pilgrims as they went up from various sections of the country to keep the annual feasts at Jerusalem. How appropriate they are for such devout companies is apparent to every attentive reader. No doubt it was with thanksgiving and joy that the travelers sang, "**I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord**," 122.

As the hills of Judea arose before them with equal gladness they sang, "**I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help**," 121. The safety and stability of those who trust in the Lord found expression in the noble words of Psalm 125. It adds a charming feature to these fifteen Psalms when we think of them as the songs of God's wandering people.

It is no spiritualizing process which declares that these also are our pilgrim Psalms, our mighty and inspired road songs.

There are several acrostic Psalms, or better, "A B C Psalms," as the Latin fathers named them (*Psalmi abecedari*). The most notable is the one hundred and nineteenth, each verse of which in the entire twenty-two parts begins with its own acrostic letter.

9. *The imprecatory Psalms*.

Besides isolated and minor passages which occur throughout the book, there are at least three, viz., 35, 69, 109, which invoke the most awful judgments upon the heads of enemies. They seem to breathe the very spirit of hatred and revenge. The believing heart of many is staggered by the fierce wrath and indignation which these Psalms display. Let us calmly study them, and learn what we may of their import.

(1) We are to offer no apology for these and the like Scriptures. If we believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, we are to hold firmly to the truth that these Psalms, terrible as they may be to us who see so little of the real nature of sin and its heinousness and of God's unalterable purpose to punish it forever, are the expression of the mind of the Spirit concerning, evil and persistent, incorrigible evil doers. Nor should it be forgotten that the Lord Jesus Himself, that meek and lowly One, employed as appalling language about the wicked as is found in the Psalter, Matthew 23:13-36; Mark 9:42-49, etc. Men who charge the writers of the Psalms in question with bloody-mindedness bring the same accusation against the Son of God.

(2) The imprecatory Psalms with few exceptions are ascribed to David. That king was as devoid of vindictiveness as any public character that can well be named. His noble conduct toward Saul, the meekness with which he bore the bitter reproaches of Shimei, his gentleness and humility, remove him far enough from the charge of bloodthirstiness, and the lust of vengeance. Compare him with the rulers of so-called Christian nations, since the reformation—the kings of Germany, the Charleses of England to say nothing of those of Austria, Spain, France, Russia—all Christian at least in name, and it will be seen that not one of them stands higher than David in the qualities of mercy and justice; nay, most of them fall far below him. When David's whole career is intelligently and fairly reviewed, it leaves on the mind the impression of a man who possessed as meek and peaceable a temper as any monarch of history. The imprecatory Psalms he wrote are extraordinary, and out of his common way of acting and feeling.

(3) These are not the utterances of resentment for private injuries, or of a desire to see personal enemies laid low. The inspired writer speaks in a public character, as the anointed king of Israel, the chosen servant of the Lord. It is for the vindication of the cause he represents, the cause of God and of righteousness, he asks.

These Psalms are associated with the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter quotes the one hundred and ninth and applies it directly to Judas Iscariot and his betrayal of Jesus, Acts 1, 20. Five times the sixty-ninth is quoted in the New Testament, besides being often alluded to, John 2:17; 15, 25; 19:28, 30; Romans 11:9; 15, 3.

The circumstances in which they are quoted are as remarkable as the quotations themselves. In the guest chamber Jesus cited 49:4: "**They hated me without a cause**," and He represents it as a prediction of the people's hatred of the Father and Himself, John 15, 25. When He drove the hucksters from the temple the disciples remembered it is written, "**The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up**," Psalm 49, 9; and the words reveal His mind at the time.

They express Christ's righteous indignation against the malice and enmity of incorrigible and impenitent sinners; and His determination to visit condign punishment upon them. In these and similar Scriptures the Lord asks that justice, rigorous and inflexible, be done on His foes; and God's justice, when executed as He only can, is approved by all right minded beings.
It is believed that what Jesus encountered at the hands of His implacable foes during His early life, and especially at its close, will be repeated in some measure in the world's crisis. Judas will have his counterpart and far more in the man of sin; the mocking rabble of Jerusalem will have theirs in the mad outburst of godlessness when the world, led on by Satan and deceived by a lie, shall wheel into line and march to battle against the Lord God and His Christ; and then these "cursing Psalms," and the awful predictions of Isaiah, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and John shall have their final and complete fulfillment.

10. *Christ in the Psalms*.

That Christ is in the book is universally admitted. All students recognize it. There may be difference of opinion as to the Messianic character of some, and as to the sense of particular passages, but the broad fact is incontrovertible. But how is He here presented? Almost as fully as in the New Testament.

(1) He is revealed as the Prophet.

In Psalm 22, 22 He says, "**I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee**." These words are quoted in Hebrews 2:12, as proof that Christ is not ashamed to call His people His brethren. It may be also that He had these words in mind when, in the intercessory prayer, he said, "**I have declared thy name unto them, and will declare it**," John 17, 26—a compendium of all that He taught His disciples, and of all He continues to teach them; for His one supreme work was and is, to reveal the Father to His people, and to bring them into His glorious presence, Hebrews 2:13. Psalm 40:9, 10, exhibits Him as preaching, and the theme of the great Preacher is, righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, lovingkindness and truth; and these all as of God, for before each of the words on which He discourses stands "thy." In the New Testament He reveals "**The righteousness of God by faith**." So likewise He is the Prophet in Psalm 45; 89; 119; 102, etc.

(2) His priestly office is made very prominent.

In Psalm 40:6, 8 we have the object of His mission announced, and the perfection of His work as contrasted with the inefficiency of the Levitical sacrifices. In Psalm 22 and 49 the intensity and awfulness of His sufferings as Priest and Victim are depicted with graphic power.

A remarkable feature in these two Psalms is that the language is that of history, the past tense, such as He uses in His prayer in John 17, as if all were an accomplished fact, a consummated thing. The human experience of the writer has little or nothing to do with the indescribable anguish of these Psalms, for suffering in them passes into a region where no mere mortal ever enters. In Gethsemane and at the cross alone is the fulfillment to be seen.

The twenty-second ends with the striking words, "**They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this**." He hath done it, is translated by Him into "**It is finished**," as Hengstenberg has shown.

It is noteworthy that the word priest in the singular occurs but once in the Psalter. In Psalm 110 is found this unexpected verse (i. e., so abruptly is it introduced), "**The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek**." The King is also the Priest whose office is everlasting, all succession being cut off. The divinely instituted Aaronic priesthood is passed by, and a still more ancient order that has lain dormant for a thousand years, is revived and perpetuated in this new Priest-king. The doctrine of the oath of God as to Christ the King and Priest is fully drawn out in Hebrews 7. The sixteenth declares the Messiah's death and resurrection, which Peter on the day of Pentecost uses with wonderful power. The sixty-eighth tells of His ascension and its results, cf. Ephesians 4, 8-12; Acts 2, 30-34.

(3) His kingly office is celebrated in very many, e. g., 2, 21, 45, 72, etc.

The King and His kingdom in these and the like Psalms is infinitely more glorious and mighty than that of David or Solomon, than of any and all the kings of earth. In exact accordance with the teaching of the New Testament the Psalms ground Christ's kingdom upon His perfect sacrifice, as the second, one hundred and tenth, and others clearly show. In fact, all through the Psalter there is a constant blending of Messiah's offices in the same Psalm:

- In the twenty-second He is Prophet and Priest,
- In the one hundred and tenth King and Priest, etc.

His offices are interdependent and inhere in the one person of the Mediator; and this great fact proves incontrovertibly that the Messianic Psalms cannot apply to any human king like David, or Hezekiah, or Josiah; to any priest like Aaron, or Hilkiah; to any prophet like Moses, or Elijah; for no one of them, good and great men as they were, ever combined all these offices in his own person. They find their perfection only in Him who was the Prophet greater than Jonah, who was the King greater than Solomon, who was the Priest greater than Aaron and Melchizedek.

(4) His sufferings are delineated minutely.

We are taught in the Psalms that He suffered from three sources.

First, *He suffered from God*. This solemn truth is brought out vividly in the twenty-second. The very words He uttered on the cross are here found, made ready to His hand. He ascribes His exceeding sorrow to God, and to His treatment of Him as the surety and substitute of His people. Atonement is unquestionably taught in this book.

Second, *He suffered from the hand of man*, i. e., for righteousness' sake. His patience, humility, benevolence, love, and piety call out the fiercest enmity of wicked men and of Satan against Him. This side of our Lord's sufferings is most fully dwelt on. With amazing force and accuracy the rage and fury of His foes are depicted. They rush upon Him open-mouthed, like ferocious beasts. They roar about Him, like savage bulls of Bashan.

He stands in the midst of them as though surrounded by baying dogs—He innocent and guileless, like the hunted hind. They stand staring and gaping upon Him:

> "But I a worm, as no man prized,
> Reproached of men, by all despised;
> All shake the head, they mock and gaze,
> Each scornful lip contempt betrays."

His sorrowful plaint in the sixty-ninth is that every delicacy of feeling is violated by His pitiless enemies. Shame covers His face, reproach breaks His heart. He is the song of the drunkards as they reel through the streets. He is an alien to His mother's children (a proof that Mary had other children after the birth of her Son, 49, 8). Wretched men dared to spit in His face. And He is all alone in His suffering, with none to pity or to help.

Third, *He suffered in sympathy with His people*. He so entirely identified Himself with them that He became a partaker with them in their afflictions and distresses. The "**godly man**," "**the upright man**," the "**afflicted man**" of the Psalter is ultimately none other than the Son of man who in wondrous sympathy makes the sorrows of believers His own, who shares with them all their human experiences except personal sin.

- If they are in trouble He enters into it with them;
- If floods are rolling over them, He likewise is in deep waters.

Indeed, we cannot understand much of this profound book unless we see that Christ is intimately associated with His people in all that befalls them (See the proof, if proof be needed, Hebrews 2, 12, 13, where He sings praise like the brethren, and trusts like the brethren—His brethren).

(5) His second coming is foretold, 1, 92, 93, etc. The Psalms, like all other Scriptures, are full of Christ. They speak of His person, offices, sufferings; of His death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again; they set forth the glory of His kingdom when He shall take to Himself His great power and reign in millennial bliss over all the earth.

11. *The Doctrine of Sin in the Psalter*.

The law was the revelation of God's mind as to sin. The Psalms are the response of God's people to His declarations on the subject. And the fulness of their teaching on the terrific topic appears:

(1) In the copiousness of the vocabulary employed to describe it; as evil, iniquity, wickedness, sin—in the abstract, or as a principle; then as manifesting itself in outward acts, as trespass, transgression, disobedience, wrongs, faults, etc.

(2) In the recognition of natural depravity. Original sin is certainly acknowledged. The taint of sin is born with us. It is not a thing contracted by example or contact with men; its presence in us and with us antedates our birth.

(3) In the confession of sin, so full, so intense, so hot burning and choked with sobs.

(4) In its pardon, God exhausts even His vocabulary in revealing His pardoning mercy in the book. He forgives sin, sins, iniquities, transgressions, trespasses; He blots them out, puts them away, covers them over, hides them. That is, the pardon extends to the utmost limit of the being, nature, activities, and pollution of sin. Luther named Psalm 32, 51, 130, 143, *Psalmi Paulini*—Pauline Psalms; for they contain the doctrine of Paul as to justification, repentance, and pardon.

12. *Recognition of the Word God in the Psalms*.

This is another prominent feature of the book. According to Psalm 1:2, the "**blessed man**" is one who among other things makes the law of the Lord his delight and his study night and day. It is no insignificant mark of genuine piety. He who has no desire nor relish for food is sick. In Psalm 19, 7-9, we have "Six descriptive titles of the word, six characteristic qualities mentioned, and six divine effects declared;" while in verses ten, eleven, the Holy Spirit gives His estimate of the value of the Word, and the believer's use of it. Psalm 119—twenty-two alliterative poems, with eight verses in each, the first word in every line beginning with the same letter, celebrates in a very wonderful manner the Word of God. In every verse but one (122) the Scriptures are mentioned by some of their many titles; hence there is ground for this inscription of a certain version. "The Christian's golden ABC of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God." In 138:2, we have God's exaltation of His Word above all His name.

13. *The doctrine of the future life is prominent in the book*. It is enough to refer the reader to the following: 1; 16:8-11; 17:15; 23; 31:5; 34: 22; 50:1-6, etc.

14. *The Psalms' place in sufferings of the saints*.

What a story they could tell if we could but hear it from sick beds, from dungeons, scaffolds, stakes, lonely mountains and bleak moors, from exiles and martyrs, from the fields of battles and the valley of the shadow of death!

> "What a record that would be, if one could write it down—all the spiritual experiences, the disclosures of the heart, the comforts and the conflicts which men in the course of ages have connected with the words of the Psalms. What a history, if we could discover the place the book has occupied in the inner life of the heroes of the kingdom of God!" (Tholuck)

It may prove helpful to some if a few incidents of Christian history be given in which the book was the stay and comfort of God's afflicted people. From various sources these now recorded have been gathered, but mainly from Dr. Ker's little volume, "*The Psalms in History and Biography*."

Psalm 2:10, 11 was the remonstrance addressed to Henry VIII of England by John Lambert, who was burned at Smithfield in 1538. His martyrdom was one of the most cruel of that time, and yet his faith was most triumphant, as he lifted his fingers flaming with fire, saying, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

Psalm 4, 6, "**Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me**," was quoted by James Melville when he was dying, for his comfort, as likewise, 23: 4; 27:1. "The candle being behind back, he desired that it should be brought before him, that he might see to die. By occasion thereof, he remembered that Scripture, Psalm 18, 28, '**The Lord will lighten my candle; He will enlighten my darkness**.'"

A woman of our own times, wife of Thomas Carlyle, thus wrote in her journal: "Sleep has come to look to me the highest virtue and the greatest happiness; that is, good sleep, untroubled, beautiful, like a child's. Ah, me! have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak. O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long?"—6:2, 3. Not a few know the sweetness of 4:8; 127:2, "**So He giveth His beloved sleep**," when insomnia torments and terrifies them.

Psalm twenty-three fills a very large place in the history of God's children.

> "It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the hearts of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master."

John Welsh, son-in-law of John Knox, sung it at two in the morning when banished from Scotland, and with other ministers of the reformed faith and a large concourse of people singing and praying with them, set sail for France. Welsh's wife besought the king for her husband, and was offered his liberty on condition of his preaching and teaching no more. The brave daughter of Knox lifted her apron with her hands and said, "1 would rather receive his head here, than his liberty at such a price."

Two young women, Marion Harvey and Isabel Alison, on their way to the scaffold for the honor and name of Jesus, were annoyed by the priests who wished to thrust their prayers on them, and the one said to the other, "Come, Isabel, let us sing the Twenty-third Psalm," which they did; and she then said, "I am come here today for avowing Christ to be Head of His church, and King in Zion. O seek Him, sirs, seek Him, and ye shall find Him." Her companion said on the scaffold, "Farewell, all created comforts; farewell, sweet Bible in which I delighted most, and which has been sweet to me since came to prison; farewell, Christian acquaintances; now into thy hands I commit my spirit, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Whereupon the hangman threw her over.

When Edward Irving lay dying he murmured again and again in Hebrew, "**The Lord my Shepherd**."

So, too, when James Inglis was on his deathbed this Twenty-third Psalm was read to him, and the dying saint said, "You will understand me as not speaking boastfully of myself when I say that every word you have read is personal to me, personal to my faith, personal to my soul. And now I will rest, and afterward we will talk of His mercies."

Within the last few days a devoted young woman, recently graduated from college and a teacher in the public schools, was fast nearing the end. Her relatives and a few friends stood round her bed, when she said, “Sing the Twenty-third Psalm.” With choking voices they began, and the dying girl joined with them, but had strength to sing but a few words when her voice failed. She said soon after, “I cannot see you well; but [looking upward] I see Jesus, and many, O so many who have gone before.” And with the word glory, she went away.

Psalm 31:5, holds an extraordinary place among dying believers— “**Into thy hands I commit my spirit**”—the words rise from saint after saint. They were the last spoken by the Lord Jesus on the cross, Luke 23:46; the last of Stephen, Acts 7:59; of Polycarp, Basil, St. Louis, Columbus, and of the poor Italian prisoner of our own times, Silvio Pellico.

On the 6th of July, 1415, John Huss of Bohemia was burned to death in a field near the ancient city of Constance, his safe conduct being violated by the Emperor Sigismund for which the pope gave absolution. A brass tablet marks the spot where Huss stood. While seven bishops removed his priestly dress piece by piece, and placed on his head a paper crown painted with demons, they addressed him, “We deliver thy soul unto Satan.”

“But I,” he said, I commend it into thy hands, Lord Jesus Christ, who hast redeemed me.”

One hundred and thirty-one years after, Luther died (1546). Among his last words were these: “I pray thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, to take my soul into thy keeping.” Then he said thrice, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth.”

Twenty-six years after (1572), John Knox died, saying, “Now, for the last time, I commend my spirit, soul and body,” touching three of his fingers, “into thy hand, O Lord.”

Nearly a century after this, Hugh M’Kail, the gifted martyr of Scotland, took hold of the ladder to go up to his death, having sung these same words, saying as he went up, “I care no more to go up this ladder, and over it, than if I were going to my father’s house.”

He called to his friends and fellow sufferers below, “Be not afraid. Every step of this ladder is a degree nearer heaven.”

In the reign of Queen Mary (1554), William Hunter, nineteen years of age, was brought to the stake for the gospel, and recited the Eighty-fourth Psalm while being bound. When the fire was kindled, he cast his Psalter into his brother’s hand who said, “William, think of the holy passion of Christ, and be not afraid.”

And William answered, “I am not afraid.”

Then, lifting up his hands to heaven, he cried, “Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit.”

Jerome Savonarola and his brother monks chanted the sixty-eighth as they marched into the Piazza of Florence to meet the trial of fire (1498).

He spent the brief respite allowed him before his execution in meditating on the fifty-first, the sorrowful Miserere. “O Lord, a thousand times thou hast cancelled my iniquities, and a thousand times I have fallen, but thou wilt yet have me secure. I will hope, therefore, in the Lord, and speedily be delivered from every trouble. By whose merits? Mine? Never, but by thine, O Lord.”

Luther afterward translated Savonarola’s meditation with these memorable words affixed:

> “Although somewhat of scholastic mud did still cleave to the feet of this good man, he nevertheless upheld justification by faith without the works of the law, and was in consequence burned by the pope. But, lo, he lives in blessedness, and Christ by my means now canonizes and crowns him, even though the pope and the papists should burst with rage.”

In the autumn of 1689 a band of eight hundred Waldenses who had been banished from North Italy into Switzerland returned to their valleys, crossing the Alps not far from the tracks pursued by Hannibal and Napoleon. They were led by their hero-minister, Henri Arnaud; and, after incredible perils and sufferings, they re-entered their old homes, singing the seventy-fourth and one hundred and twenty-ninth Psalms.

David Livingstone read the one hundred and twenty-first and one hundred and thirty-fifth, and prayed with his old father and sister, as he set out from his Scottish home for Africa; and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Moffat, wrote him at Linyanti, on the threshold of his perilous journey, that the ninety-first and one hundred and thirty-first Psalms were constantly with her as she thought of and prayed for him.

> “No book which is without the assurance of immortality could have cheated so many dying saints and deceived so many generations of mourners. There is not a pall of darkness over the Psalms; no odor of the charnel-house exhales from them. The hopes of eternity trickle like drops of light from the pens of their writers. They come to us like the breath of violets in a letter which reaches us from a land of sunshine. The Easter bells are always ringing in the Psalter.”

~ end of chapter 19 ~

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