

GOOD ADVICE FOR TROUBLOUS TIMES NO. 2387

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1894.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1888.

“Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

Isaiah 26:20.

THE Lord has a very peculiar care for His own people. He is their Shepherd and He feeds them like a flock. He is their Father and He guards them as His own dear children. Whenever times of great trouble come, He thinks especially of them. He drowned the antediluvian world, but not till Noah was safely in the ark. He burned Sodom and Gomorrah, but not till Lot had escaped to the little city called Zoar. In all His judgments He remembers His mercy towards His believing people—He does not suffer them to be destroyed even in the day of the destruction of the ungodly. Child of God, your Father's eyes are lovingly fixed upon you. His heart cares for you every moment. Unhappy are the men and women of whom we cannot say this! Unhappy are you who have never trusted and never loved your God, your Maker, and your best Friend! But thrice happy is the poorest and most tried among us who knows that the Lord is his refuge, his castle and high tower, his Defender and Provider, his God and his All!

Whenever there is any evil to come upon the land, God knows all about it, for He knows everything. He foresees all that is going to happen. He sometimes gives foresight to men, as in the case of His Prophets and, I do not doubt that even now, believing men, when they live very near to God, see farther into the future than others can. There were several occasions, in the life of John Lincolnton, when he expressly foretold the deaths of certain men, and similar power has been given to other eminent saints who have walked on the hilltop with God. They have looked much farther than the dwellers in the plain, who forget God, have ever seen! But, whether we can see into the future, or not, is of little consequence, for the Lord can see! If the father of the family knows what is to occur, his children will not be without due warning and, therefore, God, when He foresees that His judgments will be abroad in the earth, takes care to forewarn His children. and when any great calamity is coming, He provides a shelter for them in the time of storm. Let us thank God for this.

O you who have no God to go to, the future must often look very dark to some of you, especially that blackest spot of all, where rolls the chilly stream of the river of death! When you come *there*, you will have to take a plunge in the dark! But the heir of Heaven knows that whatever lies before him, all is ordained and fixed, arranged and settled, by the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God, and he can trust himself without fear to the Lord's preserving mercy! Without wishing to pry into the future, he leaves himself entirely in the hands of God.

I began by saying that Believers are the objects of God's special care and, next, that God has a foresight which He exercises on their behalf. Now, further, the advice which our careful and foreseeing God gives us is sure to be wise. We should, all of us, be wise if we could do before an event what we would wish to do after it. Unfortunately, we are often wise when it is too late. I do not know a better definition of a fool than that he is a man who is wise too late. But God will make us wise in time if we are willing to take His advice. If we will do what He bids us, we shall do the right thing. Listen, then, to the advice that God here gives us when times of trouble come—and they will come—and before times of trouble come, when we foresee them. The proper and wise course for us is plainly marked out in our text—“Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

I. My first observation upon these words shall be that BEFORE OR IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, IT IS WELL TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

Is not that a sweet call from God, “Come, My people. Come, My people”? As the hen gives her peculiar “cluck” when the hawk is in the air, to bid her chicks come and hide under her wings, so does God, here, give a gentle loving note of alarm and a gracious call of invitation, as He says, “Come, My people.” “No, do not go, My people, scattered here and there by the approach of danger, but, come, My people. Be not driven from Me by affliction, but be driven to Me by adversity. Come, My people.” How sweet the words sound to me! If I had the voice of an angel, I should hardly be able to bring out all their sweetness—“Come, My people. Come, My people. The clouds are in the sky; the first flash of lightning has seemed to split the ebon darkness of Nature. Come, My people, hasten home, be quick about it, come, My people. No, linger not. Halt not through fear, be not paralyzed with apprehension! Come, My people; come to Me, come to your God, come to your Father, come to your Friend.”

For what purpose should we come to the Lord? I think that in times of trouble, or when we are apprehending trial, we should come to spread our case before God. You fear that you are going to be very ill, or that your dear wife is likely to die. You are afraid that your property will be taken from you, or that something else that is dreadful will happen. Then come, and—

“Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint.”

Remember how Hezekiah acted when he received that abominable letter from Rabshakeh? He took it and spread it before the Lord. Now, do the same with any trouble of yours, present or impending, come and tell it all to Jesus! You were just going across the road to consult a neighbor, were you? I do not forbid you to do that, by-and-by, but *first* listen to this electric bell—“Come, My people! Come, My people!” It calls you to your God, first! Go and tell Him all about it. He will patiently hear your story, He will listen without weariness and He will efficiently help you! Therefore spread the case before Him.

The next thing you should do in coming to God is to consider His mind about such a case. Have you ever done that? When we consult a counsel, it is because we need to have his judgment upon some difficult point of law. We expect that he has had to decide something like it before. He knows the precedents that bear upon the case and we, therefore, ask his judgment. I love to see a man turning to his Bible, when a trouble is coming, to see what God has to say about such a case as his. If I am going to be bereaved, or if I am already bereaved, I wish to know how Jesus comforted those who lost their loved ones. If I am ill, I ask, “What do the Scriptures say to the sick?” If I am going down in the world, I want to learn what is God’s direction to the man who is falling into poverty. Let me come and hear what God has to say about the matter! I believe that if we acted in that fashion, we should be much more calm than we are under surprising sadnesses, for we should say to ourselves, “My main question is not, ‘How can I get out of this trouble?’ But, ‘How should I behave myself in it? What ought a man of God to do under the trying circumstances which have now come upon me?’” Does not God bid you, first of all, to consider what will be for His Glory, and afterwards to consult your own comfort? “Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and so the lesson of your trouble shall be shown to you. “Come, My people, then, tell me your anxiety, and ask what My will is about it.”

“Come, My people,” means, next, come to your God, in times of trouble, to make sure of the greatest matters. You are going to lose your little money, are you? Well, well, that is bad enough, but you have some jewels which you are not going to lose. You remember Little-Faith being robbed down Dead-Man’s Lane? Bunyan says that when the three sturdy rogues, Faint-Heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, fell upon him, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but he had certain jewels that they never found and of which, therefore, they could not rob him. So, the world may come and take away many of our external and temporary comforts, but we have a treasure that *it* never gave us and *cannot* take away from us!

No, my Brother, you did not gain that treasure by keeping shop, and you will not lose it by keeping shop. If you have true religion, you did not buy it and you shall never sell it! It is yours forever, an inheritance that never can be alienated from you! Now that you have lost so much and suffered so much, I want you to come to God and just think of what you still have—God as your Father, Jesus as your Brother, the Holy Spirit as your Comforter—you still have all the resources of Providence, all the riches of the promises, all the superabundance of the Covenant of Grace! Well then, you have not lost much, after all, have you?

I think I have told you before of a friend of mine who went to the Bank of England and came away to his business with a couple of hundred pounds in his pocket. As he passed down the Borough, he was robbed. His wife looked very white when he said that he had been robbed. “Yes,” he said, “my Dear, I have been robbed of my pocket-handkerchief.” Then the good man smiled—what did he care about his pocket-handkerchief so long as the hundreds of pounds were safe? So, if you only have to say, “My Lord, I have lost this little, and that little,” so long as your *soul* is safe, your eternal welfare is safe, your Heaven is safe, why, surely, you will thus be helped to bear without murmuring those ills which are common to men!

Once more, “Come, My people,” means that having made sure of the great things, you may leave all the little things with God. I was thinking, the other day, suppose any one of us had power over the weather, to make it rain or make it shine, just as we pleased, and I thought I should not like to be that individual because I should have people at me from morning to night, tearing me to pieces, one wanting rain, and another wanting sunshine! I would rather not have any such power! But if God gave me the control over winds and waves, and clouds and rain, if I had it tonight, the first thing I would do when I reached home would be to go upstairs and say, “Lord, You have given me power over the wind and the rain, but I know that I shall make all manner of mistakes with it. I have not the wit to manage these matters. O Lord, graciously tell me what to do.” If you do like that, is it not much the same thing as if you had not any power and left it to God altogether? You may have just as much rest as that and even more, for, to be without the power is to be without the responsibility! So, Beloved, when you go to God in times of trouble, say, “Do what You will, Lord. I desire to leave the care and burden of all this trial to You. I am too foolish and too weak to deal with it, therefore, undertake for me and henceforth, having left it entirely in Your hands, I will be quiet, even as a weaned child, and say, ‘Whatever happens, it is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.’”

I will just ring that little silver bell and then leave this point. “Come, My people. Come, My people. Come and tell Me your trouble. Come and study My mind about your trouble. Come and make sure of the greatest matters. Come and leave your little matters with Me. Come My people, draw near to Me in times of trouble.”

This is the first division of my subject.

II. The second is that IT IS WISE TO ENTER INTO THE CHAMBERS OF SECURITY WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US. “Come, My people, enter your chambers.” My business, in this second part of my discourse, is to bring a candle and to show you the way along the passages leading to the rooms provided for you—“Enter your chambers.” It is a time of trouble with you—“Enter your chambers.” “What chambers?” you ask. I am going to show you. Here is the candle to light your way, take it and follow me—“Come into your chambers.”

One of the rooms into which a man should enter in times of trouble is *the storeroom of Divine Power*. God is able to bear you through every trial. God is able to bring good out of all evil. God is able to comfort you. God is able either to prevent the trouble, or to make you strong enough to bear it! Nothing can happen to you which will be beyond the power of God and, according to His mighty power, He will certainly deliver you. He will show Himself strong on your behalf, if you do but trust Him, and you shall be able to sing, “The Lord is my Shepherd and my Shield.” “Come, My people,” get into this chamber, this well-guarded room of the Lord. Of what are you afraid? Afraid of the devil? God is stronger than Satan! Afraid of death? God is stronger than death! Afraid of poverty? Christ is stronger than poverty! Afraid of sickness? The power of God will sustain you while suffering from the most terrible disease that can possibly come to your mortal frame! “Come, My people.” Hide away in this chamber of the Divine Omnipotence. You will never be afraid, surely, after that invitation, for the almighty God shall be your defense!

May I take you into another chamber, which will, perhaps, suit you better? That shall be *the council chamber of Divine Wisdom*. So you are in trouble, now, and you are a great deal perplexed—but God is not perplexed or troubled. He sees the end from the beginning! He has all means at His disposal—there are no entanglements and knots to Him, He has the clue to every labyrinth—and He can guide you into the center of joy. Be not afraid, though you are, yourself, utterly undone, though you see no way of escape—the Lord can see where you cannot! There are no such things as darkness and night to the eyes of Him who perceives all things. Oh, I delight to know that God is infinitely wise! I, a poor fool, have done this and that, and nothing comes of it, so it seems. I have tried to do right, but apparently without success. What then? There is a higher wisdom than any man’s, and that Divine Wisdom is at work on behalf of the heirs of Heaven! “Come, My people,” enter into this bright room and take a delightful rest in this council chamber of Divine Wisdom.

Let me show you into another chamber. Possibly some of you will feel more at home there, for it is *the drawing-room of Divine Love*. This is the state chamber of the palace—"Come, My people," and enter into it. Think of this wondrous Truth of God, that God loves you. Whether He strikes you or strokes you, the Lord loves you! Whether He chastens you or caresses you, He loves you! He loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when the world's foundations shall be overthrown! He loves you without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! He has betrothed you to Himself in bonds of everlasting love. Come into this chamber with its golden hangings! Come to this couch that is softer than down and rest here! Let earth be all in arms abroad, there is perfect peace for the man who enters into this chamber of Divine Love!

But if these three chambers are not enough for your protection and comfort, may I take you to *the room of Divine Faithfulness*? This is a wonderful chamber! God is true. God is faithful. God keeps His promises. My dear Friends, do you study the promises recorded in the Bible? If you do not, I am sorry for you. The promises of God should be the constant subject of study by the child of God, because, when you get a hold of a promise from God, it is as good as the thing itself! God's promise to pay is always at par with those who trust Him—they need no discount on a Divine Promise—it is as good as the thing, itself, to their believing hearts! Oh, what an innumerable company of promises there is in this blessed Book! We need never be downhearted if we would but study this wonderful Book of God which has a promise to meet every trial and sorrow! And all the promises of God in Christ Jesus "are yes and Amen, unto the Glory of God by us." You are going into trouble—did you say that you are suffering from cancer? Oh, come into this chamber of the faithful promises! You have need to come. Did you say that your trouble is a bankruptcy caused entirely through misfortune? Come, then, into this chamber! Look at the motto hanging on the walls, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Believe it! You shall have bread and water as long as there is any beneath the cope of Heaven! God will never fail you, therefore trust Him! Be not dismayed. "Come, My people, enter your chambers."

There is one chamber into which I am very fond of entering, that is, the *strong room of Divine Immutability*. This is the one into which God took His servant Moses before He sent him down to Egypt. Moses asked the Lord what His name was, and He answered, "I AM THAT I AM." The children of Israel were not able to comprehend that glorious name of Jehovah, so the Lord gave them a shorter one, instead, "I AM." But to the full-grown child of God, this is the name in which he delights, "I AM THAT I AM," the same Immutable Jehovah, never altering, with "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Oh, how my soul delights in the Lord's Immutability! We change like the weather glass. We never are at "Set Fair," or, if ever we do get to "Set Fair," it is sure to rain, as I notice that it generally does when the weather glass is at that point. But, dear Friends, God is always the same! We wax and wane, like the moon. God is the sun, without parallax or tropic! Blessed is the Immutability of God! What a chamber to get into! When I enter it, I feel like a man in the strong room of the Bank of England. I hear a voice saying, "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There is only one more room which I will mention at this time, though I could have described many more, and that is, the *best chamber of Divine Salvation*. Look at the scarlet curtains dyed in the precious blood of Jesus! What a chamber this is for a man to dwell in, where his pardon was bought for him by the death of his Lord, where the new life is given to him by the life of his Lord, and where a throne and crown in Heaven are promised to him through the victories of his Lord! "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." What a restful chamber does this salvation make! "Come, My people. Come, My people. Come, My people. Enter into your chambers."

I have rung the silver bell. I have given you your candles. Now go and enter into your chambers and rest in Divine Power, Wisdom, Love, Faithfulness, Immutability and Salvation!

III. But now comes one thing more. God gives us, in the third place, further good advice. WHEN WE ENTER THOSE CHAMBERS, IT IS NECESSARY TO SHUT THE DOOR. Listen—"Enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you." If you go into a room and leave the door open, you have not hidden yourself, much, and you have not gained any protection by entering the chamber. I earnestly invite the people of God to enter the chambers I have pointed out—but I would also persuade them to shut the doors of those rooms. What for?

First, to shut out all doubt. You have entered the chamber of Divine Power. Now, do not doubt your God. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Shut the door. Shut the door! You have come into the chamber of Divine Wisdom. Do not doubt your God. Do not say, "This is a mistake. Surely I have been led in the wrong way. Providence has erred." Shut

that door. Shut that door! We cannot let any drafts come in to blow upon our trust in the Infinite Wisdom of God! And if you have entered into the chamber of Divine Love, how blessed it is to feel, “He has loved me from before the foundation of the world.” Does there come in an, “if”? Shut that door! There is no rest or comfort till we shut out all doubt! We must know for certain that the Lord loved us or we cannot have any enjoyment in His love.

And suppose that it is the chamber of Divine Faithfulness into which we have entered? We must have no doubt about that—we must not say to ourselves, “God may forget His promise. Perhaps He will break His Word.” Oh, shut that door, and lock it, and bolt and bar it! Say, “That door can never be opened any more! We cannot have any doubt about God’s faithfulness—He cannot lie! Is He the Lord and shall His love grow feeble to His saints? Is He God and shall He turn aside from His Word and break His Covenant and oath?” Shut that door! Let not *anything* come in that way to disturb our peace! And as to the Divine Immutability, we cannot allow the door to be open to let even the *supposition* of change come in! “Oh, God loved me,” says one, “twenty years ago!” And do you think that He does not love you *now*? “Oh, but He helped me so graciously then!” Will He not help you *now*? What? Has He changed? You are blaspheming God by the very *thought* of such a thing!—

*“Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end.”*

Do you believe this? Whenever there comes a doubt that He has cast you away, shut that door and drive a nail through it, that it may never be opened again, for the Lord cannot change! If He is God, He must forever be the same! “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.”

I think that we must first shut the doors to shut out all doubts.

But we must also shut the doors to shut ourselves in, to shut ourselves in with God. Now, my Lord, a great storm is coming, but I am shut in with You. I trust Your power; I trust Your wisdom; I trust Your love; I trust Your faithfulness; I trust Your immutability; I trust Your salvation. I trust nothing else, but I repose wholly in You. You must often have noticed what our Savior did in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew that a great tempest was coming on and He looked about Him—for what? For a pillow! What? For a pillow? Why, if you and I had been there, we would have looked round for a hencoop or a spar! But Jesus looked round for a pillow—not for a life-belt, but for a pillow—and when He found the pillow, what did He do? He went to the stern of the ship, stretched Himself out, and went to sleep! Why did He so act? Because He felt that He was perfectly safe in His Father’s hands!

And there were His poor disciples wide awake, fretting and worrying! Did they stop the wind by fuming? Did they calm the waves by complaining? No, no. They tramped up and down the little vessel, but the sea did not take any notice of them. At last they went to wake their Master. He was so soundly sleeping that they could not get Him awake as soon as they wished, so they cried, “Master, cares You not that we perish?” O faithless disciples, your Master was doing the grandest thing that He could do! He was leaving the vessel in the hands of God and He, Himself, going to sleep! Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, when you get into a great deal of trouble, may I be allowed to be your solicitor and give you a piece of advice? Go to bed and go to sleep! “Oh, but I need to be doing *something*!” Yes, I know you do. And you will make a mess of it! Go to bed. Look for a pillow and go to sleep. Nine times out of ten, when we worry and fret, we undo what we try to do! To sit still would be a far wiser thing. Come, my people, hurry not into the market! Worry not in the shop! “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you.” Rest in God and wait patiently for Him, for He can do all things, and winds and waves shall be quiet at His bidding!

I wish that I could talk like this to you all, but I must not. Some of you have no chambers to go to—you who are out of Christ have no place to rest. Oh, that you had! God grant that you may have before tomorrow’s sun has risen! May you believe in Jesus this very night! Then you shall have God for your Friend forever and ever, and all these chambers that I have mentioned shall be at your disposal.

IV. I finish up with this last remark, borrowed from the text. IT IS DELIGHTFUL TO THINK THAT THE TROUBLE WILL NOT LAST LONG. Let me read the text again. “Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

Is not that a wonderful expression—“a little moment”? A moment is but the tick of the clock, but here it is, “a little moment”—a *little* moment. Ah, me, we do not think so when the trouble comes! Perhaps it is some disease. Possibly it is incipient consumption. You have been coughing a great deal. Ah, my dear Friend, come and tell your God about it! It

will only last a little moment and then you will be where you shall cough no more—but you shall sing God’s praises, world without end! “But it is the commencement of a cancer.” I know, and that is an awful thing. But, my dear Sister, go to God, get into these blessed chambers of Divine Power, Wisdom, Love and so on, and you will hear Him say, “It is only for a little moment.” “Ah,” says one, “but I am hopelessly poor, and have been so for a long time, and I expect that I shall be so till I die.” Well, if so, it will be but for a little moment, and then you will be rich forever!

I am not an old man, yet, though I am not young, but I am obliged to tell you that years are much shorter to me than they used to be 20 years ago. And weeks—why, they seem to fly! I never get to Sunday night without seeming to have another Sunday morning close on my heels. Do you not find it so? When Jacob said that his days were few, why did he so speak? Because he was an old man! If he had been a man of 25, he would not have said that! He would have thought that he had lived a good long while, but when he got to be over a 100, then his days seemed very few. After all, what is the longest life? Suppose that you should live to be 70 or eighty? We who are over 50 feel that it hardly needs an effort of mind to project ourselves through the next 25 years and find ourselves old and gray-headed, and ready to depart—and we shall depart in due season. It is only for a little moment that we are to be here. The cup is very bitter, but then there is not much in it! Let us take it all down at a draught. These pills are too small for us to make two bites at them. Besides, to chew them is to get their bitterness—to swallow them is to know nothing about it. So, do the same with the troubles of this life! Take them as they come, cheerfully and contentedly, thankfully praising God that there is good in the evil and sweetness in the bitter. Take it all. It will not last long—

*“A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy’s land.
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I’ll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”*

Get into the chambers that the Lord has prepared for you and hide yourselves “for a little moment, until the indignation is past.”

Here I stand, on this 9th of September, in the year of Grace, 1888, still preaching to you. But there will come a time when there will be no voice of mine from this pulpit, and no glance of your eyes towards the minister here. We shall be in the world to come and then, in a short time, we shall all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ. If we have never hidden in these chambers. If we have never fled to Christ, ah, then will come the time of woe, a darksome time, indeed! Sorrows without a shore, griefs without a terminus, a bitterness that must be everlasting! God help us to drink ten thousand cups of bitterness, here, rather than have to drink that cup of wormwood and gall forever! Come, fly to Christ tonight! The Lord help you to do so! Believe in Him, trust in Him, that you may never know His indignation, but, having hidden, for a small moment from the present trouble, you shall wake up to endless joy at God’s right hand, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalm 73.

The Psalmist here works out the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. He was troubled in his own mind about it. He knew that he feared God, but he also knew that he was greatly tried, whereas he saw many who had no fear of God before their eyes, who seemed to be always prospering. Their flourishing condition was a puzzle to him, but he examined the problem and unraveled the mystery. I think I have told you before, as a little exercise for your memory, that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are both on the same subject. You can easily remember this, as the same figures are used in each instance, only they are turned the two ways, 73 and 37.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* The Psalmist knows that it must be so. He cannot doubt it. He lays it down as a proposition not to be disputed. Assuredly, “Truly, God is good to Israel.”

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped.* “I was almost seduced to sin. I seemed as if I must fall into iniquity.”

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* It really looked as if the big rogues did prosper, as if the great infidels were happy, as if, after all, religion brought trouble and irreligion brought pleasure!

4. *For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.* Some of them so stifle conscience that they even die stupefied, with no sense of the dreadful wrath that is coming upon them—“There are no bands in their death.”

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* They do not seem to have the afflictions of God’s people, and certainly they are not plagued with soul-conflict such as Christians have—they seem to make themselves very merry at all times.

6. *Therefore pride accompanies them about as a chain.* They wear it as my Lord Mayor wears his collar, for a badge of honor!

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not a bit ashamed of it! They put it on as if it were their workday dress.

7, 8. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.* What big words they utter! How they boast! How they despise the poor! How they sneer at religion! It is dreadful to hear them and, for a child of God, who is conscious of doing right, and of suffering for it, it is a hard task to hear them talk thus.

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens.* As if this earth did not contain room enough for their malice, “They set their mouth against the heavens.”

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Leaving nobody alone, having a hard word for everybody except their own chosen group.

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?”* They pretend that God is, as it were, only like King Log, taking no account of what is done by the sons of men. “He does not notice our feasts, or listen to our blasphemies.” So they say.

12. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And yet why do we wonder at this? The bullock that is intended to be killed is the first to be fatted and he that is doomed to destruction will often be allowed to prosper! Would you not let them have as much pleasure as they can have in this life, for they will have none in the next? Oh, envy them not their short-lived joys! Yet the Psalmist did so when he was down in the dumps and in an evil humor. He said, “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.”

13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.* “Surely,” he said “my holy life, my desire to be right with God and man, is a good-for-nothing thing! I do not prosper. I do not increase in riches, but it is the very reverse with me.”

14. *For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* Cannot you imagine a son of very wise parents, and very loving parents, saying, “Why, look at that boy in the street! He has no father to flog him, no mother to scold him, he can do just as he likes! But, as for me, if I do a little wrong, I am whipped for it”? Ah, my lad! The day will come when you will not envy the street-boy and you will be thankful, then, that you were not in his position! The child of God, if he sins, will have to smart for it—but there is nothing more dreadful than to be allowed to sin without being made to suffer! God save us from being given up to such a state as that!

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Your children.* Do not always speak what you think. “But if you think it, you may as well say it,” says one. Oh, no! There may be an evil spirit in yonder bottle, but nobody will get drunk upon it if you keep the cork in! So there may be evil thoughts in your hearts, but they will not injure other people if you do not, as it were, draw the cork by uttering them! It is always well to think twice before you speak once. “So,” said the Psalmist, “I cannot speak thus, because such talk would grieve God’s people.”

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* It was too painful for the Psalmist to think of it, too painful to speak of it—and yet too painful for him to hold his tongue!

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* When he came near to his God, when he went into the Holy Place, and communed with the Lord, then he saw what would be the end of the wicked. Ah, what a difference it makes when we look at the ungodly from the right standpoint! “Then understood I their end.”

18. *Surely you did set them in slippery places.* Up there ever so high.

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* When the time comes, down they are hurled from those slippery heights into the awful depths below!

19. *Now are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.* When the ungodly reach the next world, where are their riches, where are their feasts, where are their merry jokes, where are their lofty words? Listen—“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.”

20. *As a dream when one awakens, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* When a man wakes, his dream is over and gone. When God awakes to judgment and comes to deal with ungodly men, then all those who prospered in wickedness shall melt away, like the baseless fabric of a dream.

21, 22. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* For the beast only measures by the day and the hour, as far as its eyes can see. Give it a meadow deep with grass and it is perfectly happy, but when good men get measuring by the day and by the hour, and by the lifetime here below, they are foolish—and like brute beasts.

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You.* Oh, what a mercy this is for Believers! If we are ever so poor, we are continually with God! What if we are chastened every morning? It is clear that we must be with God, then, for a chastening God must be near!

23. *You have held me by my right hand.* “Even when You did whip me. *Everywhere* You have a grip of me. You hold me with Your right hand.” The Psalmist does not envy the wicked, now—he has risen a stage higher than he was a little while ago!

24, 25. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he finds in God his riches, his joy, his prosperity, his portion!

26, 27. *My flesh and my heart fails: 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.* To love the world, to love riches, to love sin, to love self—this is to be unfaithful to our Marriage Covenant with God—let such conduct never be ours.

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.* Thus, you see, the Psalmist went down to the depths, but he came up, again, all right, and his heart was made glad in the Lord, his God! So may it be with any of us who, like he, has been envious of the foolish, when we have seen the prosperity of the wicked.

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