

Christians, and Their Communion With God

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true Christian life begins and flourishes through intimate communion with God, characterized by spiritual renewal, waiting on God's timing, and a heartfelt desire to please Him.

Scripture: Isaiah 26:8-9, John 3:3, Romans 8:15, Genesis 4:26, Hebrews 11:5, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 27:4, Job 13:15

Topics: "Communion With God", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the vital principle of communion with God as the foundation and growth of the Christian life. He emphasizes the necessity of spiritual renewal, the importance of patiently waiting on God amid trials, and the deep joy found in fellowship with the Almighty. Spurgeon encourages believers to seek God earnestly, trust in His timing, and live lives that please Him. This message offers profound encouragement for Christians longing to deepen their relationship with God.

Transcript

"Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD have we waited for You, the desire of our soul is for Your name, and for the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, by my spirit within me will I seek You early." Isaiah 26:8,9.

IT is something when a man truly knows that there is a God. Behind the doubt of the existence of God, many men shield themselves and permit themselves to indulge in iniquities of which they might be ashamed if they did not make a cloak of their atheism. I would have no man live doubting the existence of God—such a doubt cannot help him to live better—it may cause him to live much worse.

It is a great deal more, however, when men so think of God as to fear Him. We say, concerning criminals—it is customary to say in legal terms—"not having the fear of God before their eyes." There is a fear of God which, though it is a spirit of bondage, is, nevertheless, salutary, and works well for the common good. There are men, doubtless, who are restrained from excess of iniquity by the belief that God has judgments by which He can overthrow them and, that at the end they will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will be a sad day for this world when that fear ceases to operate upon men!

But, Beloved, it is something infinitely higher and pertaining to quite a different sphere when we come truly to know God—when we have not merely a belief in His existence, but a distinct consciousness and realization of it—when we can speak of God, not as of some personage far away, but as of One with whom we are intimately acquainted, One who has been a Friend to us, One who has even communed

with us as a man talks with his friend. Some of you cannot possibly reach to that point as you are, for God is a Spirit, and only spiritual men can discern Him—and as yet you are not partakers of the Spirit of God. Some of you here present are still carnally minded and the carnal mind cannot perceive spiritual things. Least of all can it perceive that highest spiritual object, the ever-blessed God! "You must be born again," for, "except a man is born again (from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God." We may set it out before your eyes in glorious light, but it is not light that the blind man needs, it is eyes! And eyes must be given to you who are spiritually blind if you are ever to see God. There is One who has come on purpose to open the eyes of the blind and if your eyes are opened by Him, then shall you see God and truly begin to know Him! This spiritual vision makes a grave distinction between those who know God and those who do not know Him. And it is produced by a wondrous change called regeneration, in which darkness passes away and the true Light of God dawns upon the spirit.

I. Now, coming to our text, I shall have to say, first, that THERE IS, IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD, A PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD.

For, first, this is where their spiritual life begins. "I will arise and go to my father," was the proof that the prodigal was really restored in heart. When he cleansed himself, touched himself up and joined himself to a citizen of that country and began to work instead of wasting his substance in riotous living, it was a considerable improvement. It is always a good thing for a man to work rather than to waste his time in the indulgence of his vices. But he had not, then, begun to live spiritually. It was when he remembered his father and the cry of his spirit was, "I will arise and go to my father," that the gracious work was begun in his soul!

Beloved, if any of you are seeking after righteousness by your own works, or by your prayers, I do not know that this is a token of a new life. It may be that you are even in the dark seeking after God if, perhaps, you may find Him there, but when there rises in your spirit this thought, "I must find God, I must come to God, I must confess my sin unto the Lord, I

must lay myself at the Lord's feet, I must meet with Him," then we hope the best things for you! So long as you are content with ministers, priests, sacraments, books, prayers and all that you can do, you are satisfied with the mere shell! But when there awakens in your spirit this desire, "It is God whom I have offended; unto God will I make my confession. It is from God that I need pardon, oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even to His seat." When there is formed within your spirit this resolve, "I will seek the Lord's face until He turns to me in love and accepts me as His child"—then it is that spiritual life begins. Your first true dealings with God, after a spiritual fashion, are infinitely more important than all the outward forms of religion, whatever they may be! I am not judging one form more than another, but, if you are content with the externals and do not come to the internals. If you do not come to close grips with God and humble yourself before Him, you know not, as yet, what spiritual life really means! This, then, is where spiritual life begins—with coming into communion with God.

And, Beloved, this is where the life of the real Christian grows and makes advances. We behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and that gives us hope. That gives us peace. That gives us rests and in proportion as we know more of God, as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son, our Graces grow. Faith has for its meat and its drink the knowledge of God. Knowing Him, and His exceedingly great and precious promises, we come to rest in Him more fully. Ignorance is the enemy of faith, but a knowledge of God greatly strengthens and increases our confidence in Him. You do not grow in Grace, my Brothers and Sisters, by listening to fine oratory, even though it is of a sacred kind. The real growth comes

to you when God the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells with you. It is not when you have been so many minutes on your knees, or have read so many chapters in the Bible, that you necessarily grow—it is when you have spoken with God, and God has spoken with you—when He who is the Alpha of your spiritual life is all the letters of it right up to the Omega! He has worked all our works in us, and without Him we can do nothing. He is the truly strong man who lives near to God. That man can do anything who throws Himself back on the all sufficiency of the Most High. Rest upon yourself, or trust in anything below the stars, and you will dwindle and decay. But rest in God, and come into close contact with the Divine Invisible—let your rock and refuge be His throne—and you will go from strength to strength by the power of God the Holy Spirit that shall dwell in you!

Next, beloved Friends, it becomes to the Believer the tenor of his life to please God. That is a beautiful testimony that is borne concerning Enoch—"Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." There are many who have not yet even thought of doing such a thing as this, and there are some who may have thought of it who, perhaps, have not yet attained to it. But what a blessed thing it is for a man to be brought to trust in the Lord Jesus and to seek the Glory of the Savior and to yield his will to God's will! And to feel that God is his All and in all that He does, he strives to please God! You know what it is to be pleased with your child and pleased with what he has done. It is not perfect—from your standpoint you can see many imperfections—but still, it is most acceptable as coming from your child. He has done it with all his heart and you are well pleased with him.

Well now, that should be the tenor, and it is the tenor of the life of every man who has really been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the work of the Spirit of God! Jesus could truly say of His Father, "I always do those things that please Him." And in proportion as we grow like Jesus, this becomes a true description of our lives—they are well pleasing unto God. What a contrast there is between the man who pleases God and the ungodly man! The ungodly man does what pleases himself, or what pleases his wife, or what will please his neighbors. But the Christian man, although he is willing to please his neighbor for his good to edification, yet aims first at this mark—not to please men, but to please God. This makes his life altogether different from the life of the man who has not God in all his thoughts.

Again, Beloved, this principle of communion with God becomes the very flower of our lives. When are we happiest? There is no room for question here—every Believer knows that he is happiest when nearest to his God. I hope that for the most part we enjoy such full communion with God that our peace is like a river. But there are times of great tidal waves of fellowship when we get nearer to God than at other seasons. We have our Tabors and our transfiguration glories. We can sometimes say, "Whether in the body, or out of the body, we cannot tell: God knows." And we then know nothing else but God—we seem wrapped up in Him! I am not speaking of any mysticism, although it does happen that among the mystical writers this experience is most often spoken of. This is a joy which belongs to all Believers when they enter into the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

The Christian man is not at his best when he is healthiest, or when he is wealthiest, or when he has been most successful, or when he has had the praise of men. No, the day in which the flower of his life has come to the climax of its beauty and pours out its sweetest perfumes—the day in which his life is life, life indeed, is when he is drinking in that loving kindness of God which is better, even, than life itself! See, then, as the worldling finds his highest enjoyment here or there, the Christian finds the summit of his joy in fellowship with his God!

I must not leave this point till I have said one other thing about this principle of communion with God—this is the hunger and this is the thirst of the Christian. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." To get near to God is the great passion of our spirit. To accomplish this to the fullest, we would face grim Death in his den! Yes, sometimes we could almost use the extravagant language of Rutherford, when he declared that if God were on the other side, to get at Him he would swim through seven Hells, for nothing can keep back the impetuosity of a heart that is all aflame with love to God and feels that all its Heaven lies in communion with Him!

Well now, dear Friends, if you and I are conscious that this is true, that there is in us a principle of fellowship with God, then notice that this proves that there has been a Divine renewal worked in us. It was not so once. Alas, it was very much otherwise! If news could have been truly proclaimed that God was dead, some of you would have been very happy to hear it, for you would have been no more worried with thoughts of eternity and of the Day of Judgement! But now, what an awful thing it would be for you if, even for a moment, you indulged the thought that there was no God! Why, you would have lost everything! All joy would have vanished from you in an instant if God were not real to you! Then what a change is this, a radical change, one which could only have been worked by supernatural power—as great a change as when the dead rise from their corruption and come forth into newness of life!

This proves your sonship, too, for no man cries after God and longs for fellowship with Him, except it is upon the principle of, "Abba, Father." Slaves do not crave the presence of their masters! It is sons who long to be with their father. You are a true son of the Highest if you hunger and thirst after God!

This proves your holiness, too, in a measure, for like will to like and if your heart pants after God, you have been made a partaker of the Divine Nature so far, at least, that you are now striving after holiness, or else I am sure you would not be seeking after God. Unholy hearts feel a repulsion to the holy God and seek to fly from Him. But the holy soul longs for communion with the holy God. That is a clear proof that you have had implanted within you a spiritual nature! There is within you, now, a new heart and a right spirit! You have passed into the higher life. You have become a spiritual man, otherwise you would not long for this spiritual God!

This proves your heavenliness, too, for that same desire which draws you to God is drawing you to Heaven. What is Heaven but to be with God? And He who now is drawing you with cords of a man and with bands of love, to His own glorious self, is by that very process drawing you towards the place where He reveals His face! And He is also making you fit for that Beatific Vision which shall be your everlasting happiness!

II. Now, secondly—and I must be brief on many points here—THIS PRINCIPLE DISPLAYS ITSELF AND WORKS IN VARIOUS WAYS.

Begin the text—"Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You." We are longing for God and it is dark and cloudy—what shall we do? Why, wait for Him. Instead of impatiently complaining of His Providential dispensations which would be flying off at a tangent from Him, we stand still that we may see the salvation of God! We have come to our Red Sea and we can go no farther. And now our love to God, our fellowship with Him makes us just abide where we are until He says, "Go forward." And then we march through the sea, dry-shod. Waiting is often a very heavenly experience. You will find it a difficult thing to do if you doubt. He that doubts, hurries and worries, but he that believes does not make haste through cowardly fear! He waits and sings to himself, "My Soul, wait you only upon God; for my

expectation is from Him."

This waiting is expectation. It means, "I cannot see the way out of this difficulty, but I shall see it. I do not yet perceive God's plan for my deliverance. but I shall be delivered. I do not know how bread shall be given me, but I shall have it even if God has to send ravens with it, or to rend Heaven, itself, in two! I shall have His promises fulfilled and I will wait His time." This patiently waiting upon God is one of the blessed displays of a spirit that is at perfect peace with God and longs to keep in fellowship with Him.

"Yes," says the text, "in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You." Sometimes, the way of God's judgments may mean the appointed way, the regular way. I believe that God's people love prayer because it is one of the ways in which God meets with them. You love the House of Prayer and the hearing of the Gospel because it is in the sanctuary and in the preaching of the Gospel that God has often met with you. We have had many happy Sabbaths, here, and on these little Sabbaths in the middle of the week, as I often call our Thursday night services, the Lord has manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world and we have waited for Him expecting to meet Him in His house. These Believers waited upon God until the ordained time for deliverance from His judgments. Perhaps the husband or the child was dead, or, possibly, the judgments were of another kind. Famine desolated the land—the water in the brooks was dried up. Enemies were all over the country ravaging with their sword and their bow—blood flowed freely and then God's servants waited for God. They expected that He would come at such a time of need and display Himself in some unusual manner. My Brother, my Sister, whenever you have a great trouble, expect a great mercy! You will find it the path of wisdom when you have a great joy, to be afraid, but when you have a great sorrow, then have a high anticipation of blessing! That big wave is washing up some jewel that lay deep down at the bottom of the sea—it would never have come to your feet if it had not been for the storm that washed it where you can now find it!

Sometimes the Lord comes with spiritual judgments to His people. He blights and blasts and withers all their hopes and they are ready to despair. Yet they must not despair, but each one must say, "Lord, show me why You contend with me. Now come in and deal with me in mercy. When You have stripped me, when You have scourged me, yes, when You have slain me, then come and fulfill Your Word, 'Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.'" Beloved, see what it is to wait upon God in His judgments! You know how hypocrites do—they wait upon God, cap in hand, while His service pays them—but as soon as ever the Lord begins to try them, or somebody laughs at them, or their religion seems to injure their business, then good-bye to religion! But they are the true men who can truthfully say, "In the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You."

You can tell a good dog when you see him follow his master. Though somebody who wants to steal him offers him a dainty bone, he will have nothing to do with him, but he will keep close to his master's heels. And the true Believer follows God when he seems to get nothing by it—even when he appears to be a loser by it. He loves not God with a cupboard love, for what he gets from Him in this world, but with a child's love, which says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." So, you see, this communion with God leads to waiting for Him.

Sometimes we do not seem as if we could get quite as far as that, and then this communion leads to desiring—"The desire of our soul is to Your name." We want to know the Character of God which is set forth in His name. We love that Character! We desire to have it and to reflect it in our own lives. Our desire is to God's name which signifies not only His Character, but His honor and His Glory. We desire to see Him glorified! Our heart is glad when Christ is glorified and our spirit is sad when His name is dishonored.

Surely, this name means the Word of God, for the Word of God is God's name written large, and we have a desire towards God's Word! O Beloved, the longer one lives upon God's Word, the more he feels that he cannot endure anything which is other than God's Word! There is a great difference between the largest words of men and the very smallest words of God, if such there are. I have heard of a certain Divine who preached a sermon and afterwards asked an aged man what he thought of it. This was a very foolish thing for him to do. The old man answered, "Well, I have not much to say." "But," enquired the minister, "did you not think that there were capital divisions and wonderful distinctions in the sermon?" He said, "Yes; but there was one distinction you seemed to me to forget in your sermon." "What was that?" "The distinction between meat and bone—you gave us a large quantity of bone, but I did not perceive that I had any meat—and there is a vast distinction there." When a man once gets to feed upon the Word of God, all the rest is bones, and he lets the dogs have them. But as for himself, he needs spiritual meat and he must have it! Cannot many of you say that you desire to know the Character of God and to reflect it—that you desire to spread the Glory of God and that you desire to feed upon the Word of God? Your desire is to His name!

And, once more, your desire is to remember the Lord—"And to the remembrance of You." I wish that I had a memory that was so narrow that it could only hold the things of God! Do you not sometimes find that if you hear a bad thing, it sticks in your memory? Oh, what an abominable memory that is which lays hold of all the draft of Sodom and cannot get rid of it, while the timbers that come floating down from Lebanon are often allowed to go by! But our desire is to the remembrance of God—I am sure that it is. Oh, that I did always remember Him when I wake and until I sleep—and in my dreams still remember Him and if I wake in the night be still with Him! This is what we want! Our fellowship with God is such that if we do not always remember Him, yet our desire is still towards the remembrance of Him, and we desire to see repeated what we remember of Him. If He has drawn us a thousand times, we desire that He would draw us yet again. And for the great world and the one Church of Christ in it, our cry is, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are You not He that has cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Our desire is that we might see Him again as we have seen Him in the sanctuary—and see Him as His goings were of old when He showed Himself mighty in the deliverance of His people! I, for one, can say that my soul desires this beyond anything. Oh, that He would do, again, what He did in our fathers' days! He can do it and He will! This is the desire of His people. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, we beseech You!

Then, again, observe that this principle of communion shows itself in a personal yearning. Did you notice, as we read the chapter, that the eighth verse is in the plural and the ninth verse is in the singular? "Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O Lord, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired you in the night." O Brothers and Sisters, this lonely, personal desire of the Believer after God, is another form of fellowship with Him! Sometimes, we feel as if we were in the darkness of night, all alone—there is nobody to speak with us, or to speak for us. Then what a blessing it is if we can say, "With my soul have I desired You in the night"! Then have I needed no other candle for my darkened chamber, no other sun to make my day, but my Lord and His sweet Presence! I will not dwell on this experience because I think that many of you can say that it is so with you, also. It has been very dark with you. You have had a world of inward trouble, but still, above it all, there has been this desire after God, for you could not do without Him. You have said concerning your choicest earthly comforts—

"If you should take them all away,

Yet would I not repine.

If you, my God, will but come to me,

Let them all go, for I have all

I need when I have Thee."

This principle of communion takes one other form, that of personal seeking—"Yes, with my spirit within me will I seek You early"—seek You with my spirit, not with lip-service or head-service, but with heart-service, with my spirit within me! There is a great deal to be done indoors, Brothers and Sisters, and there are some who are so busy outside that they do not attend to anything inside. But it is a blessed thing when the soul in its inward parts is all alive in seeking after God—"With my spirit within me will I seek You." And notice that it is, "I will seek You early." I will be out on time. I will waste not a moment, I will not delay. I will seek You and I will seek You now.

I have a wish springing up in my heart that some here present would begin to seek the Lord now. But if any of you have sought Him and have known Him and you have lost communion with Him, seek the renewal of that communion at once! Do not think that it will take weeks for you to get back where you once were. Conversion may take place in a second of time and so may restoration! It is not always so—it may be a long process—but it is sometimes very speedy. "Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." I think that some of us have known what it is to feel as dull and stupid as a silly sheep. But while we have been in the House of God, or while we have been alone, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord has visited us and we have taken the wings of eagles and have been up and away! And we wondered what had happened to us, for we had been turned from a deadly state into one of life and vigor!

Listen to this text and see how short a business this heart-reviving is. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." What is needed? "If any man hears My voice and opens the door." It does not take long to open a door, does it? Yet that is all Christ asks of us! He does not say, "If anybody sweeps the house and gets the supper ready, I will come and partake of it." No, but, "If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Dear Heart, you know your Lord—you know His voice and the very sound of His fingers on the door! Open to Him! Say, "Come in, my Lord. If I have kept You out, my Dearly-Beloved. If I have kept You out till Your head is wet with dew and Your locks with the drops of the night, I beg ten thousand pardons of You! Come in, I beseech You, and sup with me, that I also may sup with You." It can soon be done and I pray that it may be. At any rate, this is how God's child often has to cry—"Come to me, Lord! With my spirit within me will I seek You early."

Perhaps somebody says, "Well, I have been praying the Lord to come to me, but I have not at once had His company." How did you expect Him to come? "I thought I would be made glad," you say. Yes, but the Lord sometimes comes to His people and humbles them—and when your soul is humbled in the dust, it may be certain that the Lord is with you—quite as certain as if you were full of joy! Sometimes He comes to us with the spirit of chastisement and rebuke. Well, do not pick and choose—so long as He comes! Seek Him early, for He comes for your good and He will come and bless you.

III. I was to have said, thirdly, that THE LORD TAKES PLEASURE IN THIS COMMUNION WITH HIS PEOPLE, but I must not detain you.

I will just point out that the next to the last verse in this chapter shows how the Lord loves the fellowship of His people. He invites them to commune with Him—"Come, My people." He points out the way to fellowship—"Enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you." That is, get alone with your God. Then He provides for this communion—Christ is our hiding place and He, Himself comes to meet us—"Come My people." I invite you, Beloved, tonight if you can, or as soon as you can, to have a special season given up to nothing else but fellowship with God, that you may now begin, again, a fellowship which afterwards shall not easily be broken. Pray! If you feel that you cannot pray, read. Let God speak to you. Get into conversation with Him, somehow. A conversation, you know, needs two to engage in it. Hear what God says to you, read a passage from His Word. And then pray. If you find you cannot pray, praise! Say something to Him and then read, again, and let Him speak to you. But come not away until He has spoken to you and you have very distinctly spoken with Him. Let this be the burden of your prayer, "Lord, I want to come to You; I want, through Jesus Christ, my Mediator, to have fellowship with You, and to abide in Him in nearness to You." May the Lord help you in this matter, for truly there is no life like it!

I wish that I could invite all here present to such a life as that, but there is, as I have told you before, the previous step. There must be the new birth—there must be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel which we have continually to preach to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." And then you shall know that there is a God! Then you shall have fellowship with God and then your life shall be, in its measure, like the life of those in Heaven who behold the Lord's face and serve Him day and night in His Temple.

May the Lord bless these words to all of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH26

Verse 1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. God would have His people to be a singing people! They often sigh—they should more often sing. God makes their songs and appoints the song for the day, and so helps them to cheer the darkest day with some melodious music.

1. We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Jerusalem may fall, her walls may be destroyed till not one stone is left upon another, but still, "we have a strong city." In the salvation of God we live and are safe. Our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. The eternal purposes of God shall guard the safety of His people.

2. Open you the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the Truth of God may enter in. This city is for the righteous, for those who keep the Truth of God. They are to dwell in this city—not fighting in the open, not wandering in the plains—but dwelling at ease behind the massive walls and bulwarks which God Himself has appointed in His salvation.

3. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You. This is our city. By faith, we enter into the purposes and promises of God and there we dwell in perfect peace! The adversary may thunder outside the walls, but what of that? He may threaten that He will capture the city, but how can he do so when the Lord is there? This is a sweet, sweet verse—may you all get the very marrow of it! "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You."

4. Trust you in the LORD forever. Not sometimes, but always. Not for a certain number of days during your season of trial, but if the trial should last a lifetime, "trust you in the Lord forever."

4. For in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength. If He could fail you, you would do well to be looking out for another shelter. But since His strength is everlasting, let your faith also be everlasting. Lives there a man who has fully trusted in God and yet has been confused? Is there one anywhere who has really relied upon the invisible power of Jehovah and yet has found Him fail in the hour of need? It cannot and it shall not be!

5, 6. For He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, He lays it low; He lays it low, even to the ground; He brings it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. This is always God's way—overturning the great and the proud and casting down the mighty works of men, so that he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm soon finds himself in a pitiful condition. All the proud, who glory in their own power, shall be as when a city is battered down and the very dust is trodden by "the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy."

7. The way of the just is uprightness: You, Most Upright, do weigh the path of the just. God makes a plain path for His own people and He, knowing their way, forms a right estimate of it. Let them never fear for a moment that He will condemn them because of the condemnation of their fellow men! He takes care, Himself, to weigh the path of the just and His scales cannot err.

8, 9. Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, have we waited for You; the desire of our soul is to Your name, and to the remembrance of You. With my soul have I desired You in the night; yes, with my spirit within and will I seek You early: for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. You notice that the song given to us in this chapter is all concerning God. We are bid to trust in Him, we are told how safe are they that do so, we are shown how futile is all strength apart from Him and now the desire of His saints is set forth as being toward Him, and toward Him alone.

10. Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. Until men are changed in heart, and renewed in nature, they will not see God. If you could transport them to the land of uprightness, where there would be no sin to tempt them, yet even then they would not know the Lord! Still is our Savior's message true, "You must be born again." O unconverted men and women, we look upon you through our tears because you are incapable of everything that is good and right until the Lord, in Covenant mercy, renews your hearts and brings you to know Him! Of the ungodly man it is truly declared, "In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

11. LORD, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them. There are some people who will not see and, as the old proverb has it, there are none so blind as those that will not see. But they will one day be made to see, if not to their salvation, then to their everlasting shame and confusion! They shall be made to see that, after all, there is a God and that He is strong to punish the ungodly, and to overthrow His adversaries! I pray that no one of you may refuse to see by the light of the Gospel until he is forced to see by the blaze of the Judgment Day. Yet, alas, there will be such!

12. LORD, You will ordain peace for us: for You have also worked all our works in us. That is a delightful verse! An ordination is spoken of here, for God has ordained peace for His people and they must have it—and they shall have it! On the other hand, His people ordain glory for Him, for they declare, "You have also worked all our works in us." Thus we also sing—

"And every virtue we possess, And every victory won, And every thought of holiness, Are His alone."

13. O LORD our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name. "O Lord, how sadly, how long, how grievously did those other lords domineer over us! But from this time forth we will know no name but Yours and, when we mention it, it shall be by Your Grace, and by Your power, alone, that we even put our trust in Your wondrous name!

14. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore have You visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Yes, our lusts are all dead! They will never live again, thank God! The Sword of the Spirit has slain them—"they are deceased." We want to have nothing more to do with them, we desire that the very memory of them should perish.

15. You have increased the nation, O LORD, You have increased the nation: You are glorified. God is always glorified in the increase of His people. Therefore we should, above all other reasons, pray for the increase of the Church because God will thereby be glorified.

15, 16. You had removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. LORD, in trouble have they visited You, they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them. That is true of hypocrites! But it is also sweetly true of some whom God is bringing to Himself. Child after child has died, loss after loss has broken down the business. Now they turn to God. Oh, it is a blessed loss that makes us find our God! What we gain is infinitely more than what we have lost. What a mercy that God is willing to hear us in the time of trouble, that all our putting off and rejection of Him do not make Him put us off! I remember one who wished to hire a horse and buggy to go to a certain town and he went to the place where he could hire it, and asked the price. He thought that it was too much, so he went round the town to other people and found that he could not get it any cheaper. But when he came back to the place first visited, the owner said to him, "Oh, no, no! I will not let my horses to you. You have been round to everybody else, and now you come back to me because you cannot get what you want elsewhere. I will have nothing to do with you." That is man's way of dealing with his fellow man, but it is not the Lord's method of dealing with us! When you and I have gone round to everybody else, the Lord still welcomes us when we come back to Him! Yes, just as harbors of refuge are meant for ships in distress that would not have put in there except for the storm and danger, such is the mercy of the Lord God in Jesus Christ. If you are forced to accept it, you are still welcome to it! If you are driven to it by stress of weather, you may come in, for the harbor was made for just such as you are.

17, 18. Like as a woman with child, that draws near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and cries out in her pangs, so have we been in Your sight O LORD. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not worked any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Ah, no, all the agonies of a mind, all the troubles of a soul cannot save it! This is the work of Grace. This is the gift of God! What a mercy it is that such a cheering promise as this next verse contains comes in just here

19. Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. That note of resurrection comes in as a word of comfort to the most dispirited, the most despairing. As the dead shall live because of Christ, even so is there hope for you who are driven to a very death of despair! You cannot live by your own power. Your hopes are all gone, dead and buried, and you lie helpless and lost—but as the Lord will raise the dead from their graves—so will He give you hope and bless and save you, if you come and trust in Him.

19-21. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, My people, enter into your chambers and shut your doors about you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For, behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. The blood of the murdered shall cry to God from the ground, as did Abel's. The slain in battle shall not be forgotten. God will come and punish the earth for its iniquities. Blessed are they that hide themselves in Christ, till the indignations are past.

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