

Prayer, the Proof of Godliness

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that prayer is the universal and infallible mark of true godliness, demonstrating a believer's continual dependence on God and growth in grace.

Scripture: Psalm 32:6, Psalm 51, John 13:10, Genesis 32:26

Topics: "Prayer", "Godliness", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that prayer is the essential and universal evidence of true godliness. He explains how prayer reflects the believer's ongoing relationship with God, motivates continual repentance and dependence, and manifests in many forms of heartfelt communication with the Lord. Using biblical examples and practical insights, Spurgeon encourages self-examination and a vibrant prayer life as marks of spiritual vitality.

Transcript

"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found." Psalm 32:6.

ALL men are not godly. Alas, the ungodly are the great majority of the human race! And all men who are, to some extent, godly, are not equally godly. The man who fears God and desires to truly know Him has some little measure of godliness. The man who has begun to trust the Savior whom God has set forth as the great Propitiation for sin has a blessed measure of godliness. The man whose communion with God is constant, whose earnest prayers and penitential tears are often observed of the great Father, and who sighs after fuller and deeper acquaintance with the Lord—this man is godly in a still higher sense. And he who, by continual fellowship with God has become like He, upon whom the image of Christ has been photographed, for he has looked on Him so long and rejoiced in Him so intensely—he is the godly man! The man who finds his God everywhere, who sees Him in all the works of his hands. The man who traces everything to God—whether it is joyful or calamitous—this is the godly man. The man who looks to God for everything, takes every suit to the Throne of Grace and every petition to the Mercy Seat—the man who could not live without his God, to whom God is his exceeding joy, the help and the health of his countenance, the man who dwells in God—this is the godly man. This is the man who shall dwell forever with God, for he has a Godlike-ness given to him and, in the Lord's good time, he shall be called away to that blessed place where he shall see God and shall rejoice before Him forever and ever!

Judge yourself, dear Hearers, by these tests, whether you are godly or not. Let conscience make sure work about this matter. Possibly, while I am preaching, you may be helped to perform this very necessary

work of self-examination. The text, itself, is a test by which we may tell whether we are among the godly—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."

I. The first is, THE UNIVERSAL MARK OF GODLINESS—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto

You."

When a man is beginning to be godly, this is the first sign of the change that is being worked in him, "Behold, he prays." Prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy. Until he has come to pleading and petitioning, we cannot be sure that the Divine life is in him at all. There may be desires, but if they never turn to prayers, we may fear that they are as the morning cloud and as the early dew—which soon pass away. There may be some signs of holy thought about the man, but if that thought never deepens into prayer, we may be afraid that the thought will be like the seed sown upon the hard highway which the birds of the air will soon devour. But when the man comes to real pleading terms with God—when he cannot rest without pouring out his heart at the Mercy Seat—you begin to hope that now he is, indeed, a godly man! Prayer is the breath of life in the newborn Believer! Prayer is the first cry by which it is known that the newborn child truly lives! If he does not pray, you may suspect that he has only a name to live—and that he lacks true spiritual life.

And as prayer is the mark of godliness in its infancy, it is equally the mark of godliness in all stages of its growth. The man who has most Grace will pray most. Take my word for it as certain that when you and I have most Grace, we may judge of it by the fact that there is more of prayer and praise in us than there was before. If you pray less than you once did, then judge yourself to be less devout, to be less in fellowship with God, to be, in fact, less godly! I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than this—the measure of the intensity of your prayer. I am not speaking about the quantity of it, for there are some who, for a pretense, make long prayers. I am speaking about the reality of it, the intensity of it. Prayer is best measured by weight rather than by length and breadth and, in proportion as you grow in Grace, you will grow in prayerfulness, depend upon it! When the child of God reaches the measure of the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, then he becomes like Elijah, a man mighty in prayer. One such man in a Church may save it from ruin! I go further and say that one such man in a nation may bring down upon it untold blessings! He is the godli-est man who has most power with God in his secret pleadings—and he who has most power with God in his secret pleadings has it because he abounds in godliness! Everyone that is godly shall pray unto the Lord, whether he is but the babe in Grace who lisps his few broken sentences, or the strong man in Christ who lays hold upon the Covenant Angel with Jacob's mighty resolve, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." The prayers may vary as the degree of godliness differs, but every godly man has, from the beginning to the end of his spiritual life, this distinguishing mark, "Behold, he prays."

Further, dear Friends, true prayer is an infallible mark of godliness. If you do not pray, remember that old true saying, "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul." You know how often it has been the case that the highest professions of holiness have been sometimes accompanied by the practice of the deadliest vices. For instance, wherever the doctrine of human perfection has been much held, it has almost always engendered some horrible licentiousness, some desperate filthiness of the flesh which is unknown to anything but that doctrine! In like manner, I have known persons to become, as they say, so conformed to the mind of God, so perfectly in accord with the Divine Will that they have not felt it necessary to pray. This is the devil in white—nothing else—and the devil in white is more of a devil than when he is dressed in

black! If anything leads you to decline in prayerfulness, or to abstain altogether from prayer, it is an evil thing, disguise it as you may!

But wherever there is real prayer in the soul, take it as certain that the lingering of holy desire in the spirit proves that there is still life in the spirit. If the Lord enables you to pray, I beseech you, do not despair. If you have to pray with many a groan, and sigh, and tear, think none the less of your prayers for that reason! Or, if you think less of them, the day may come when you will think better of your broken prayers than of any others. I have known what it is to come away from the Throne of Grace feeling that I have not prayed at all! I have despised my prayer and wept over it, yet, some time after, in looking back, I have thought, "I wish I could pray as I did in the time when I thought that I did not pray at all." We are usually poor judges of our own prayers! But this judgment we may make—if the heart sighs, and cries, and longs, and pleads with God, such signs and tokens were never in an unregenerate heart! These flowers are exotics—the seed from which they grew must have come from Heaven! If you pray a truly spiritual prayer, this shall be, indeed, a sure mark that the Spirit of God is striving within you and that you are already a child of God!

Once more, beloved Friends, prayer is natural to the godly man. I do think that it is a good thing to have set times for prayer, but I am sure that it would be a dreadful thing to confine prayer to any time or season, for to the godly man prayer comes to be like breathing, like sighing, like crying. You have, perhaps, heard of the preacher who used to put in the margin of his manuscript sermon, "Cry here." That is a very poor sort of crying that can be done to order, so, you cannot make the intensity of prayer to order—it must be a natural emanation from the renewed heart! Jacob could not always go and spend a night in prayer. It is possible he never spent another whole night in prayer in all his life after that memorable one! But when he spent that one by the brook Jabbok, he could "do no other," as Luther said. Pumped-up prayer is little better than the bilge water that flows away from a ship! What you need is the prayer that rises from you freely, like the fountain that leaped from the smitten rock. Prayer should be the natural outflow of the soul—you should pray because you must pray, not because the set time for praying has arrived—but because your heart must cry unto your Lord.

"But," says one, "sometimes I do not feel that I can pray." Ah, then, indeed, you need most to pray! That is the time when you must insist upon it that there is something sadly wrong with you. If, when the time has come for you to draw near to God—you have the opportunity and the leisure for it, but you feel no inclination for the holy exercise—depend upon it that there is something radically wrong with you! There is a deadly disease in your system and you should, at once, call in the heavenly Physician. You have need to cry, "Lord, I cannot pray. There is some strange mischief and mystery about me. There is something that ails me! Come, O Lord, and set me right, for I cannot continue to abide in a pray-erless condition!"

A prayerless condition should be a miserable and unhappy condition to a child of God—and he should have no rest until he finds that once more his spirit can truly pour itself out before the living God! When you are in a right state of heart, praying is as simple as breathing. I remember being in Mr. Rowland Hill's chapel at Wotton-Under-Edge, and stopping at the house where he used to live. I said to a friend who knew the good man, "Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?" He replied, "Well, my dear Sir, I do not know that I can tell you that. And if you were to ask, 'Where did he not pray?' or, 'When did he not pray?' I should be unable to tell you. The dear old gentleman used to walk up and down by that laurel hedge and if anybody was outside the hedge, he would hear him praying as he went along. Then he would go up the street and keep on praying all the time. After he had done that, he would come back, again, praying all the while. And if he went indoors and sat down in his study, he was not much of a man to read, but you would find that he was repeating some verse of a hymn, or he was praying for Sarah Jones who was ill, or he would plead for

Tom Brown who had been backsliding."

When the old man was in London, he would go up and down the Blackfriars Road and stand and look in a shop window. And if anybody went to his side, it would be found that he was still praying, for he could not live without prayer! That is how godly men come to be, at last—it gets to be as natural to them to pray as to breathe! You do not notice all day long how many times you breathe. When you come home at night, you do not say, "I have breathed so many times today." No, of course you do not notice your breathing unless you happen to have asthma! And when a man gets asthma in prayer, he begins to notice his praying! But he who is in good sound spiritual health breathes freely, like a living soul before the living God—and his life becomes one continual season of prayer.

To such a man, prayer is a very happy and consoling exercise. It is no task, no effort. His prayer, when he is truly godly and living near to God, is an intense delight! When he can get away from business for a few quiet minutes of communion with God, when he can steal away from the noise of the world and get a little time alone—these are the joys of his life! These are the delights that help us to wait with patience through the long days of our exile till the King shall come and take us home to dwell with Him forever!

Those prayers of the godly, however, may be presented in a great many forms. Some praying takes the good form of action—and an act may be a prayer. To love our fellow men and to desire their good is a kind of consolidated practical prayer. There is some truth in that oft-quoted couplet by Coleridge—

"He prays best, who loves best All things, both great and small."

There comes to be a prayer to God in giving alms, or in preaching the Gospel, or in trying to win a wanderer, or in taking a child upon your knee and talking to it about the Savior. Such acts are often most acceptable prayers, but when you cannot act thus, it is well to pour out your heart before the Lord in words. And when you cannot do that, it is sweet to sit quite still and look up to Him and, even as the lilies pour out their fragrance before Him who made them, so do you, even without speaking—worship God in that deep adoration which is too eloquent for language—that holy nearness which, because it is so near, dares not utter a sound lest it should break the spell of the Divine silence which envelopes it! Frost of the mouth, but flow of the soul, is often a good combination in prayer. It is blessed prayer to lie on your face before God in silence, or to sigh and cry, or moan and wail, as the Holy Spirit moves you. All this is prayer, whatever shape it assumes, and it is the sign and token of a true Believer's life.

I think that I have said enough upon that first point—the universal mark of godliness is prayer.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A POTENT MOTIVE FOR PRAYING—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found."

The motive seems to be, first, because God heard such a great sinner as David was. Possibly you know that this passage is very difficult to interpret. It appears to be simple enough, yet there are a great many interpretations of it. In the Revised Version you will find the marginal reading, "In the time of finding out sin." Let me read the context—"I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this let everyone that is godly pray unto You in the time of finding out sin." It runs all right and the context seems to warrant it. I am not sure that it is the correct translation, but the sense harmonizes with it, so let us learn from it this lesson, that God has heard the prayer of a great sinner!

There may be, in this House of Prayer, someone who has gone into gross and grievous sin—and this reading of the passage may be a message from the Lord to that person. David had sinned very foully and he had added deceit to his sin. His evil deeds have made the ungodly to rail at godliness even until the present day, so that infidels ask in contempt, "Is this the man after God's own heart?" It was an awful sin which he committed, but there came to him a time of finding out his sin. His heart was broken in penitence and then he went to God and found mercy and he said, in effect, that it was so wonderful that such a wretch as he should be forgiven, that every godly man, as long as the world stood, would believe in the confession of sin to the Lord and in the power of prayer to obtain pardon for the guilty! I like that meaning of the text, for it is sometimes necessary to us, when we are under a sense of sin, to think of such sinners as Manasseh, Magdalene, the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus. There are times, even with those whom God has greatly blessed, when nothing but the sinner's Savior will do for them. And when they feel that if there were not salvation for the vilest of the vile, there would be no salvation for them!

So God gives us a case like that of David, that everyone that is godly may pray unto Him in the time of finding out his sin. We might have been afraid to come if David had not led the way! "Come," he says of the broken heart, he who wrote the 51st Psalm, "God forgave me and He did it that He might show forth in me all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter repent and believe."

Another motive for prayer which I think the text brings before us is this, we all need daily pardon—"For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You." "For this"—for this covering of sin, for this blotting out of iniquity. Dear Friends, I hope that all of you pray unto God daily for the forgiveness of sins. I am sure that all the godly among you do so. If you commit no sins, then the Savior made a great mistake when He left us the prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." What is the need of that petition if we have no trespasses to be forgiven? But for this, that is, for the pardon of his sin, everyone who is godly will pray unto the Lord.

And everyone who is godly will pray unto God for this reason, also, namely, because he has received the pardon of sin. You remember when you made your confession to the Judge of All and received absolution from Him? You remember when, with broken heart and downcast eye, you acknowledged your sin unto Him and He put away your transgression? Well then, that is the reason why you should always be praying! He who heard you, then, will still hear you! He who put away your sin, then, by that one great washing in the Fountain filled with blood, will continue to put away your sin by that foot-washing which He continually gives to us, of which Jesus said, "He that is washed needs not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Blessed be God, we shall not cease to pray for pardon although we have received pardon! We will crave the daily renewal of the Divine token of reconciliation. If we received it when we were sinners, much more shall we receive it, now that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son! If we received it when we were outcasts, much more shall we receive it, now that we are His dear children!

Again, "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You," that is to say, because troubles come, for the context teaches us this lesson. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble." Brethren, the Lord takes care to keep us praying, does He not, by giving us constant needs? Suppose that I had a friend upon whom I was dependent and whose society I greatly loved, and that he said to me, "I will give you, in a lump sum, as much money as will last you till this time next year, and then you can come and see me and receive another year's portion. Or, as you like to come to my house, would you prefer to have the amount quarterly?" I would reply, "I will choose the latter plan, for then I should come to you four times in the year and have four dinners with you."

"Well, then, would you like it monthly?" "Oh, yes! I would like to come monthly and spend a day with you every month." "Perhaps," he says, "you would like to come daily?" "Oh, yes! I would prefer that! I would like to have a daily portion at your table." "Perhaps you would like to stay with me always, as Dr. Watts did when he went to Sir Thomas Abney's, to stay for a week, and I think that 'week' lasted for 28 years, for he never went away till he died. Perhaps you would like to receive everything from my hand and have nothing but what I give you." "Oh, yes, my Friend, this continual indebtedness, this constant dependence would give me so many opportunities of better knowing you whom I love so much that I would like to have it so."

You have heard of "a hand-basket portion." There is a maid to be married and her father says to her, "There, my girl, I will give you so many hundred pounds. Do your best with it, for it is all I shall have for you." Another girl is married and her father says, "I shall send you down a basketful of things on such a day" and so, every week, a present goes to her. It is a hand-basket portion, and it is always coming! It never comes to an end and she gets a great deal more from the old man than the other does, who has her fortune all at once. At any rate, it comes, every time, "with father's love." If it is given only once and is done with, perhaps, an ill feeling, animosity springs up. But if it comes, "with father's love," 50 or a 100 times a year, see how affection is increased between father and daughter! Give me a hand-basket portion!

You who like may go and gather a week's manna—it will stink before the end of the week! I like to have mine fresh every day, just as it comes warm from the ovens of Heaven and ready for the heavenly appetite of the man who learns to live upon the daily gift of God! For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto God. He shall have trouble to drive him, he shall have Grace to draw him, he shall have weights to lift him and they shall be so adjusted that though they threaten to hold him down, they shall really raise him up!

Once more, I think that, broadly speaking, the word, "this," here means, "Because God hears prayer, for this reason shall everyone that is godly pray unto Him." Now, dear Friends, it always will be a dispute between the true Believer and the mere professor whether God hears prayer. Of course the outside world will always sneer at the idea of God hearing prayer! A man said to me, one day, "You say that God hears your prayers?" "Yes, I do say it." Said he, "I do not believe it." "No," I said, "I never thought you did. And if you had believed it, I might have thought that it had been a mistake! I did not expect a carnal mind to receive the Truth of God." "Oh," said he, "there is nothing in it!" Then I asked him, "Did you ever pray, my Friend? Did you ever pray God?" No, he never did. "Very well, then," I said, "do not say anything about what you do not know! If you know nothing about what it is, hold your tongue till you do—and let those of us who have tried it speak of what we know."

If I were put in a witness box tomorrow, any lawyer in London would like to have me for a witness. So, when I stand here and declare solemnly that hundreds and even thousands of times God has answered my prayers, I claim to be as much accepted as an honest witness as I should be in the High Court of Justice. And I can bring forward, not myself, only, but scores and hundreds of you! Brethren, tell me, does not God hear prayer? [Voices—"Yes! Yes! Yes!"] I know He does and you godly folk can all bear witness that it is so! Calmly and deliberately, you could tell of many instances in which you called upon the Lord and He answered you. I am loath to argue this point, for it is not a point to be argued. If a man said that I had not any eyes, he might say it and my eyes would twinkle as I heard him say it. And when anyone says, "God does not hear prayer," I am sorry for the poor soul that dares to make an assertion about a thing which he has never tested and tried!

God does hear prayer and because He hears it we will call upon Him as long as we live! "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You"—because there is reality in it and there is a blessed result from it! Prayer moves the arm that moves the world, though nothing is put out of gear by our praying. The God who ordained the effects that are to follow prayer ordained the prayer, itself—it is a part of the grand machinery by which the world swings upon its hinges! III. I have not time to say more on that part of my subject, though so much more might be said. The last point is one to which I want to call your earnest attention—that is, THE SPECIAL OCCASION WHEN PRAYER IS MOST USEFUL. "For this cause shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found," or, "in a time of finding," as the margin of our Bibles has it. Is there any set time when God is to be found?

Well, in general, it is the time of this mortal life. So long as you live, here, and pray to God, He has promised to answer. Though it is the 11th hour, do not hesitate to pray! Christ's word is, "He that seeks, finds." There is a special promise to those who seek the Lord early, but this does not exclude those who seek Him late. If you truly seek Him, He will be found of you.

I think, too, that the time of finding is under this Gospel dispensation. God has always heard prayer, but there seems to be a larger liberty allowed us in prayer, now. The Mercy Seat is unveiled and the veil is torn away that we may come with boldness. But besides that, there are special times of finding God, namely, in visitations of His Spirit. Revival times are grand times for prayer! How many there are who put in their suit with God because they feel moved thereto by a heavenly impulse! There is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," as there was with David, and they begin to bestir themselves.

In closing, I will dwell only upon this one point—there are special times of finding for individuals and one of these is the time of the finding out of sin. Come back to the translation which I gave you before. The time when you will find out sin is the time when you will find God. "Why," you say, "it is a horrible thing for me to find out my sin." It is, in itself, but it is the best time to find out God! When your eyes are blinded with tears of penitence, you can best see the Savior. Do not say, "I find myself to be so guilty and, therefore, I have no hope." No, rather, because you find yourself to be guilty, therefore have hope, for the Savior came to seek and to save such guilty ones as you are! The time, I say, when sin finds us out, and we are humbled and ashamed, is the time when we may find our God through Jesus Christ.

So, too, a time of decision is a time for finding God. Some remain shilly-shallying—they have not decided whether they will live for the world and perish, or seek Christ and live eternally. But when the Spirit of God comes upon you and you say to yourself, "I must find Jesus Christ, I must get forgiveness and lay hold of eternal life. Give me Christ, or else I die," you shall have Him! God has promised that if we seek Him with our whole heart, He will be found of us. When you are decided for God thoroughly and intensely, it will be with you a time of finding.

So will it be when you come to God in full submission. Some of you have not laid down your weapons of rebellion yet. You cannot be reconciled to God while your sword is in your hand—down with it, Man! Some of you have fine feathers on your helmets and you come before God as great captains—off with those feathers! He will accept you in rags, but not in ribbons! He will receive you if you come confessing your sin, but not boasting of your supposed merits. Down with you into the very dust! Yield to God! Oh, that His mercy might make us all pliant as the willow before His mighty power! Then shall we find peace through Christ.

I believe that it is a time of finding when you come to concentration. I have known men, sometimes, say with a holy determination, "I am resolved that I will find Christ. I will find salvation and everything else shall go till I do. I shall go upstairs to my room, shut the door and not come out, again, till I have found the Lord." When the whole soul is bent on seeking Christ, then will the Lord speedily appear, and it shall be a time of finding!

But especially is it a time of finding when the heart, at last, trusts wholly and implicitly to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. You shall find that God has found you when you have done with yourself and taken the blood and righteousness of Christ to be the sole hope of your soul! God lead you to this, dear Hearers, this very hour!

I know that there are some here who are seeking the Lord. There are some who have lately begun to come under great anxiety. I hope that you will not be long in that anxious state, but that you will come right out of it by trusting yourselves with Christ. It is a wonderful end to anxiety when you have somebody to trust and when you trust that somebody. Now, trust Jesus! He will save you. Yes, He saves you the moment that you trust Him, and He will never let you go, but will bring you to His Glory above!

May God send His blessing on these words, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM33.

Verse 1. Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Notice the context between the words, "rejoice," and, "praise." Joy is the soul of praise. God is not extolled by our misery, but by our holy mirth! Be glad in the Lord, for so can you make Him glorious. "Rejoice" and "praise," "for praise is comely for the upright." Praise is the beauty of a Christian. What wings are to a bird, what fruit is to the tree, what the rose is to the thorn, that is praise to a child of God!

2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto Him with the Psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. In the old days of forms, ceremonies and outward worship, musical instruments were abundantly used. But in the early Christian Church there was no such thing as a musical instrument because the Believers were afraid of going back to Judaism. It is curious that as men get further away from Christ, they get fonder and fonder of such things as these! Still, under certain conditions, they are lawful, though, we think, not expedient. God was acceptably worshipped in the olden time with harp and with Psaltery—and He may be so now—yet we worship Him, so we judge for our own selves, better without them.

3. Sing unto Him a new song. For, you see, that all the music had singing with it. "Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him." "Sing unto Him a new song." "Unto the Lord, unto the Lord, Oh, sing a new and joyful song!" It was only as it guided and strengthened the singing that the instrumental music was tolerated even in those early days.

3. Play skillfully with a loud noise. God ought to be worshipped with our best—"Play skillfully." God ought to be earnestly worshipped—"with a loud noise." Hearty worship is what the Lord desires and what He deserves. Let us render it to Him.

4. For the Word of the LORD is right. Let us praise Him for His Word. Men are depreciating it—let us appreciate it. "The Word of the Lord is right"—from the first page to the last it is right, emphatically right—let us praise Him for it!

4. And all His works are done in truth. The book of Providence is full of the Truth of God! Oh, for Grace to read it with thankful hearts! Let us praise God and sing unto Him as every page passes under our eyes.

5. He loves righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. You would think, from the way in which most people talk, that the world was full of misery and full of the anger of the Lord, but it is not! Notwithstanding all the evil that is in it, it is still true that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

6. By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. They did not grow out of something that was there before—they were made out of nothing—"by the Word of the Lord." All the hosts of innumerable stars were created "by the breath of His mouth."

7. He gathers the waters of the sea together as an heap: He lays up the depth in storehouses. We know not how much God has in store, out of sight, in the vast abysses, but we know that He drowned the world when He broke up the fountains of the great deep.

8. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. He is so great a God that all the oceans are in His sight but as a heap! Let us worship, and adore, and bow down before Him.

9. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. With God it is no sooner said than it is done! "He spoke, and it was done." All that He has to do is but to bid it be so and so it is. And, as it was for creation, so is it for confirmation—"He commanded, and it stood fast."

10. The LORD brings the counsel of the heathen to nothing: He makes the devices of the people of no effect. If the folly of man yields to God's wisdom, so, also, shall the wisdom of man. No matter though men take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, God will certainly carry out His purposes.

11. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations. What the Lord intends to do, He will do—there is no turning Him from His purpose—and His dispensations stand fast forever.

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance. If you have chosen God, God has chosen you! It is a happy thing when it is so. When these two elections meet—your election of God and God's election of you—then you are happy, indeed!

13. 14. The LORD looks from Heaven; He beholds all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Just as in a glass hive you can see all the bees and all they do, so can God see us—and He can see all that we think and read—and He knows us through and through.

15, 16. He fashions their hearts alike; He considers all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host. Look at Napoleon who marched more than half a million men into Russia—but they nearly all melted away and, after a time—he, himself, became a captive on the lone rock of St. Helena! "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host."

16. A mighty man is not delivered by much strength. Look at Goliath, stronger than all his fellows, yet how soon he lay prone upon the earth when a single stone from the sling of David smote him in the forehead.

17-19. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eyes of the LORD are upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Whatever becomes of kings and princes in the day of need, the Lord will take care of those who fear Him and put their trust in Him! There have been vast numbers of cases of amazing Providences—so many that they have ceased to be amazing—in which God has provided for those who have trusted in Him.

20. Our soul waits for the LORD: He is our help and our shield. Dear Friends, notice those three, "ours"—three firm clasps, three strong holdfasts—"Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield." Why did He not say, "Our souls wait," for there are many of us? Ah, but we are so alike in this one thing that it is as if we had only one soul in all these many bodies, so the Psalmist says, "our soul." You remember when the disciples went to Emmaus and Christ talked with them, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" There were two of them—why did they not say, "Did not our hearts burn?" Well, their hearts were so one that he who spoke, called them, "heart," rather than, "hearts." And it is so here—"Our soul waits for the Lord: He is our help and our shield."

21, 22. For our heart shall rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name. Let your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in You. That is a good prayer with which to close our reading! Let us all present it at the Throne of heavenly Grace!

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