

Soul-threshing

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God disciplines His people with loving wisdom and tailored severity to purify their souls, ultimately preparing them for holiness and usefulness.

Scripture: Isaiah 28:27-28, Hebrews 12:6, Psalm 1:3, Proverbs 3:11-12, Revelation 21:27, Jeremiah 9:7, Psalm 94:12

Topics: "Divine Discipline", "Sanctification", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the biblical metaphor of threshing to illustrate God's loving discipline of His people. He explains how God carefully and wisely uses trials to purify believers, removing sin and preparing them for holiness and usefulness. Spurgeon encourages believers to embrace affliction with faith and humility, understanding it as a sign of God's care and a step toward spiritual maturity. This sermon offers comfort and insight into the purpose and process of divine chastening.

Transcript

"For the black cummin are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin, but the black cummin are beaten out with a stick and the cummin with a rod. Bread flour must be ground; therefore he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with his cartwheel, nor bruise it with his horsemen." Isaiah 28:27,28.

The art of farming was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, so the Lord, when He sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the Prophet puts it, "His God did instruct him to discretion and did teach him." God has taught man to plow, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern farmer could not thresh by machinery as we do, but still, he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain. This is what is intended in the first clause by the "threshing instrument," as also in that passage, "I have made you a sharp threshing instrument having teeth." When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence—"Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin." They also had flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cummin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. "The black cummin are beaten out with a stick and the cummin with a rod."

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books, but the meaning of the illustration is this—that as God has taught farmers to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does He, in His Infinite Wisdom, deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through the same agony of conviction—we are not all, to the same extent, threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction. One escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels as it were the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations!

Our subject is just this. Threshing. All kinds of seeds need it. All sorts of men need it. Secondly, the threshing is done with discretion. And thirdly, the threshing will not last forever, for so the second verse of the text says, "Bread flour must be ground and, therefore, he does not thresh it forever, nor break it with the his cartwheel, nor bruise it with his horsemen." First then—

I. WE ALL NEED THRESHING.

Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin—but they deceive themselves and the Truth of God is not in them. The best of men are men at the best and, being men, they are not perfect but are still compassed about with infirmity. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have so joyfully been brought into our garner. Even the wheat is joined to the straw which was necessary to it at one time. About the kernel of the wheat, the husk is wrapped and this still clings to it even when it lies upon the threshing floor. About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion we are faulty. If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it—or if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin is shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that it rains. So far as my own observation goes, I have found no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect—the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in Heaven, but not in this poor fallen world! We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing floor is intended to work for us.

Now, threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk. Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses or the wheel of a cart to separate it. But there's the rub—our soul not only lies in the dust, but "cleaves" to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world—and this compact is not soon broken. In our hearts we hate every false way and yet we sorrowfully confess, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not! Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which if not sinful in themselves, yet run in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts. It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father's house even when the king does most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths! We were all born in the house of evil and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath! That which was bred in the bone is hard to get out of the

flesh. Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things and break us away from evil. This needs a Divine hand and nothing but the Grace of God can make the threshing effectual. Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated together from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil and abhor all iniquity. When we shake right out of the straw and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet. It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark! And I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation! From a certain sort of sins we are very easily separated by the Grace of God early in our spiritual life, but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight and the work has to be repeated. The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the Divine skill and power of the Holy Spirit and by Him only will it be accomplished.

Threshing becomes necessary for the sake of our usefulness, for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honor God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing floor, you must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.

Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into Heaven anything that defiles, therefore every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other before we can enter into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yes, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

Perhaps some of us today are lying up on the threshing floor suffering from the blows of chastisement. What then? Why, let us rejoice therein, for this testifies to our value in the sight of God. If the wheat were to cry out and say, "The great drag has gone over me and, therefore, the farmer has no care for me," we should instantly reply, "The farmer does not pass the corn-drag over the garner or the nettles—it is only over the precious wheat that he turns his cartwheel or the feet of his oxen. Because he esteems the wheat, therefore he deals sternly with it and spares it not." Judge not, O Believer, that God hates you because He afflicts you! But interpret truly and see that He honors you by every stroke which He lays upon you. Thus says the Lord, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Because a full Atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus for all His people's sins, therefore He will not punish us as a judge—but because we are His dear children—therefore He will chastise us as a father! In love He corrects His own children that He may perfect them in His own image and make them partakers of His holiness. Is it not written, "I will bring them under the rod of the Covenant"? Has He not said, "I have refined you, but not with silver. I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"? Therefore do not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the feeling of the flesh, but judge according to faith—and understand that as threshing is a testimony to the value of the wheat, so affliction is a token of God's delight in His people!

Remember, however, that as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian. If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in Heaven, for it is not the threshing floor of the imperfect, but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is, therefore, a humbling token and, as long as we feel it, we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is a prophecy of our future perfection. We are undergoing from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail—we shall, by His prudence and wisdom, be delivered from the husk of sin. We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us and, for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect! Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." If we, being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of Spirits cause us to live unto Himself by His holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work! And since we know whereunto tribulation tends, let us glory in it and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes! We need threshing—the threshing proves our value in God's sight! And while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing! In the next place I would remark that—

II. GOD'S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION, "for the black cummin are not threshed with a threshing instrument." The poor little black cummin, a kind of small seed used for flavoring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. "Neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin." This little seed, perhaps the caraway, would have been ground by so great a weight—it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner! The black cummin were soon removed from the stalks by being "beaten out with a staff." And the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. For tender seeds, the farmer uses gentle means, but for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.

Reflect, my Brothers and Sisters, that your threshing and mine are in God's hands. Our chastening is not left to servants. much less to enemies—"we're chastened by the Lord!" The Great Farmer, Himself, personally bids the laborers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way except as Divine Wisdom shall direct—they would turn the wheel upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a stick! I have seen God's servants trying both these follies—they have crushed the weak and tender and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked! How roughly some ministers, some Elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls! Yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave His chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity and preserve His own from being destroyed thereby! How glad I am of this, for there are many, nowadays, who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also He has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as black cummin. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn—"the Lord preserves the righteous." Not a stroke in Providence is left to chance—the Lord ordains it and arranges the time, the force and the place of it. The Divine Decree leaves nothing uncertain! The jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives! Whether we bear the teeth of the corn-drag, or men ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the Divine hand—everything is by appointment and the appointment is fixed by Infallible Wisdom! Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that the instruments used for our threshing are also chosen by the Great Farmer The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments—and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it. Indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly

objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy! Then I could have borne it, " and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod—and the black cummin might even prefer the wheel to the staff—but happily the matter is left to the choice of One who judges unerringly! What do you know about it, poor sufferer? How can you judge of what is good for you? "Ah," cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty, but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement. When I was at school with my uncle, for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it! Either it was too thin or too stout and, in consequence, I was threatened by the sufferers with punishment if I did not do better next time! I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened. You smile at my simile but you may also smile at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but this, Lord! Any affliction but this!" How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial, for it would then be no trial at all! Almost every really useful medicine is unpleasant. Almost all effectual surgery is painful. No trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial and, none the less right because it is bitter!

Notice, too, that God not only selects the instruments, but He chooses the place. Farmers in the East have large threshing floors upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley—and upon these they turn horses and drags—but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement—and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area. Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits. They are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing floor, but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to your mind?" Should a child select the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial—it is hard to be crippled in youth or to be poor in age or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom! A part of the skill of the physician may lie not only in writing a prescription but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken. One draught may be most useful in the morning and another may be more beneficial in the evening— and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which He has prepared for us. I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age and I would gladly screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best and there we must leave it. The instrument of the threshing, the place, the measure, the time, the end are all appointed by Infallible Love!

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The farmer is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh. The horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it. In the same way the Lord has a measure in all His chastening. Courage, tried Friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve! Tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength, such shall the affliction be—the wheat may feel the wheel, but the black cummin shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure—and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke!

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, but quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you! Yet I have personally realized this Truth upon the bed of pain and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions. I did not doubt His wisdom, then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. Our Great Farmer understands how to divide us from the husk and He goes about His work in a way for which He deserves to be adored forever!

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go—

"If trials six are fixed for men They shall not suffer seven. If God appoints afflictions ten They never can be eleven."

The old Law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourges there always comes in that, "save one." When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because 99 failed to effect His purpose, but all the powers of earth and Hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number! We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing. The Lord never sports with the feelings of His saints. "He does not afflict willingly " and so we may be sure He never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the farmer in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which He sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble and, perhaps, it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured—those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled nor shall they be. Possibly they also have a feeble mind and that which others would laugh at would be death to them—they shall be kept as the apple of the eye!

If you are free from tribulation, never ask for it! That would be a great folly. I met with a Brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, "Do not worry about that, but be happy while you may." Only a very strange child would beg to be flogged! Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as He metes out to others—they do not need it and they could not bear it—why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed, but what of that if they are a superior grain—a seed of larger usefulness intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier threshing since their use is greater. It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horseman and must feel the wheel of the cart—and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes. There is not one among us but what would say, "I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did." Yes, but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel! He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations and driven to the verge of despair. At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of all the world, and then after days of fighting with the pope and the devil, he would go home to his bed and lie there broken-down and trembling! You see God's heroes only in the pulpit or in other public places—you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life, otherwise you might discover that the bread corn is bruised and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow, themselves! Envy no man, for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.

Brothers and Sisters, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of His people! Let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children and if you have to rebuke your Brother or Sister in Christ, do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over

the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a stick and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go and sow and leave your Elders to thresh!

Next, let us firmly believe in God's discretion and be sure that He is doing the right thing by us. Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us, let it be with a, "nevertheless not as I will." Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come you out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness—and the process of threshing will all the sooner be completed! God make us wise in this matter! A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is—

III. THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOREVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here—"Bread flour must be ground, but He will not always be threshing it." Oh, no! "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you." "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Rejoice, you daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, you sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance! The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round—for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord O my Soul! The Lord will yet bring home His banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last forever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing floors nor corn-drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds, "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle and return in triumph." The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning comes. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming—the day that shall go no more down forever! Come eat your bread with joy and march onward with a merry heart, for the land which flows with milk and honey is but a little distance before you. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, abide the Great Farmer's will, and may the Lord glorify Himself in you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 90; 119:21-32. "The prayer of Moses, the man of God."

I think this Psalm has been very much misunderstood because the title has been forgotten. It is not a Psalm for us in its entirety—it cannot be read by the Christian and taken as it stands. It is a Psalm of Moses as far as Moses can get. It goes a long way, but there was a Joshua that lead the people into the promised land—and there is a Jesus who has "brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." That light shines through the gloomy haze of this dark Psalm. Please remember that Moses was a man peculiarly tried. We have never duly given weight to the afflictions of Moses. All the people that he brought out of Egypt, with two exceptions, died. And he saw most of them die—himself having the sentence of death in himself that he, like the rest, must not cross into the Land of Promise. So that with two millions or more of people round about him, that forty years he stood in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—and with all the mercies that surrounded him, yet still he must have had continual sorrow of heart—all his old friends and companions passing away, one by one. It is a brave Psalm if you read it in that light—it is a grand specimen of heroic faith!

Verse 1. Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. All Your saints abide in You. Your fiery cloudy pillar covers and protects us.

2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Oh, that is grand to feel that there is something stable—there is a Rock that never crumbles—God from everlasting to everlasting the same! As for us, what are we?

3. You turn man to destruction and say, Return you children of men. A breath gave them life—a word makes them die.

4-6. For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night. You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers. We have seen this over and over again, as we shall see it yet again this year in the flourishing and the cutting down of the grass. But we forget it for ourselves. Too often we forget it for our companions—we think that they are immortal where all are mortal. Let us correct our estimate that we may somewhat correct our sorrows.

7. For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled. Which was true of that generation. They died because of God's anger, but we bless God—as many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are not under the Divine anger—it is taken away. When it does fall upon us, it is as a father is angry with his children. It troubles and consumes us, but blessed be God, we usually walk in the light of His Countenance and joy and rejoice therein. Let us value His mercy as we see the misery of His wrath!

8. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance. That is true of you that know not God! Your sins are always before His face, but it is not true of Believers. You have cast all their sins behind Your back. God has forgotten the sins of His chosen according to His own promise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever." O blessed Gospel! Moses cannot reach to that.

9. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. "For all our days are passed away in Your wrath." So it was with those that were round about Moses, but our days are passed in God's goodness! They shall pass away in Infinite Love! "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

10. The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away. Speaking of the mass of men, this is all that can be said of them. But as for the godly, where do they fly? They fly into His bosom who has loved them with an everlasting love! What is death but an open cage to bid us fly and build our happy nests on high? Blessed be God that we do fly away! Have not we often wished for it and said, "O that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest"—that will come, by-and-by!

11. Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. As He is greatly to be revered, so is He greatly to be feared. But the Lord has said of His people, "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you." Blessed be His name.

12-14. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may

rejoice and be glad all our days. Poor Israel was greatly afflicted. Those deaths in the wilderness made her a perpetual mourner! But Moses asks that God will return to His people cheer and encourage them and let the few days they have to live be bright with His Presence.

15-17. Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your Glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes the work of our hands establish it

PSALM 119:21-32.

21. You have rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Your commandments. Wherever there is pride in the heart, there is sure to be error in the life. A proud man is wrong to begin with and as long as he continues proud, he must be wrong. It is not possible for him to be right. God has rebuked him and God has cursed him. How wise it would be of him to be humble! Remember we shall have either to be humble or to be humbled—and it is much better to be humble than to have to come under the humbling dispensations of God's hand!

22. Remove from me reproach and contempt: for I have kept Your testimonies. O Lord, do not suffer men to believe lies and slanders against me, or if they do, let my conscience sustain my courage by the consciousness that I have kept Your testimonies.

23. Princes also did sit and speak against me. Had they nothing else to do but talk against God's servants? No, they sat down to do it with deliberation. "Princes also did sit and speak against me."

23. But Your servant did—"Go to law with them?" No, not so here. "But your servant got in the face and defended himself?" No, no! Look, you will not read those words. But, "Your servant was brokenhearted about it to have the great men of the earth speaking against him?" No, it is not so either. "But your servant did"—

23. Meditate in Your statutes. Is not that a very blessed and admirable way of enduring slander—simply to take your Bible and read a little more than usual? You will cure it so.

24. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors. Because I love them and delight in them. I submit my life to their guidance. I go to Your Book to ask what I shall do. I consult it as the Oracle of God. I take my doubts and difficulties and dilemmas there and I find that they are all met. "Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors."

25. My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken You me according to Your Word. Ah, there is a note of sadness here. The Psalmist complains of himself. He found himself very sorrowful and he could not get out of the sorrow. Or he found himself very full of business cares and he could not get rid of them. "My soul cleaves to the dust"—as though it was stuck to the dust and the dust to it and could not rise. Then how sweet the prayer, "Quicken You me." "Did You not first make me of dust and will You not, at the last, quicken my mortal body out of the dust? Then, now, my Lord, quicken You me according to Your Word." See, here is an evil complained of. He finds himself cleaving to the dust. Here is a remedy sought, "Quicken You me." And here is an argument pleaded with God—"according to Your Word." There is a promise for it. Lord, fulfill Your Word!

26. I have declared my ways and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. A confession had been made—"I have declared my ways." That confession had been accepted—"You heard me." Then a petition is offered—"Teach me Your statutes." "You see that I confess how wrong I was. Now give me Grace that I may not go wrong again." May that be our spirit always!

27. 28. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works. My soul melts for heaviness: strengthen You me according unto Your Wore. "I am poured out like water " says the Savior. "My heart is like wax. It is melted." It is the greatness of pain, the greatness of fear, the greatness of sorrow, till He seems to melt away in the fire like wax. "For heaviness " says He, "my soul melts. Then strengthen You, Me." Oh it is so sweet to turn to

God when your soul is burdened—to look to Him and say—not, "deliver me." Observe that—the child of God is not so anxious to get rid of trouble as he is to know how to behave worthily under it! "Strengthen You, me, according to Your Word." How he harps on that, "according to Your Word." The child of God does not expect God to do otherwise than He has promised to do. And he is quite content if the Lord will act according to His Word, for well does our poet put it—

"What more can He say than to you He has said— You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

In this book dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever your trouble, there is a promise to meet it! If you lose a key and you send for the locksmith, as a general rule, somewhere in that bunch of keys, he has a key that will fit your lock. And so here is a bunch of keys and there is a key, here, that will exactly fit the lock of your trouble whatever it may be for God foresaw the circumstances of all His people and prepared a promise for every circumstance!

29. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Your Law graciously. "Take away the evil, give me the good." "The way of lying." Oh it is a dreadful thing to get into that! There are some that have a way of doing it—some that do it naturally. Some that do it by implication. Some think it shrewd to deceive. "Remove from me the way of lying." If truth should be banished from all the world, it ought to find a shelter in the breasts of Christians! The Christian is forbidden to take an oath because there should never be any necessity for it. His word—his, "Yes yes"—his, "No no," should always be sufficient. Thank God it is where the Grace of God is!

30, 31. have chosen the way of truth: Your judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck into Your testimonies: O LORD put me not to shame. Here is, first, choice—"I have chosen the way of truth." Here is his practically carrying it out—"Your judgments have I laid before me." Here is his perseverance in it—"I have stuck into Your testimonies." And then there is his prayer about it, "O Lord, put me not to shame." And it is a prayer which is sure to be answered! "Truth may be blamed but it cannot be shamed." Truth is God's daughter and He will take care of her. If you have chosen the way of truth, it is a way in which though some may censure and slander, your righteousness shall come forth in due time as the noonday!

32. I will run the way of Your commandments when You shall enlarge my heart. "When I get liberty of heart, then will I take as my choice Your ways." The Christian is never so much at liberty as when he is under law to Christ. He knows the difference between license and liberty. He has a liberty to do as he wills because he wills to do as God wills him to do—and herein lies the only freedom which we desire!

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