

The Believer's Heritage of Joy

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that the believer's true and eternal heritage of joy is found in embracing God's testimonies—His Word, Covenant, and Son—by deliberate choice, faith, and holy diligence.

Scripture: Psalm 119:111, Psalm 109:109, Jeremiah 31:33, Jeremiah 31:34, John 14:9, Romans 8:32, John 6:37, John 10:28

Topics: "Christian Joy", "God's Covenant"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound joy and eternal wealth found in the believer's heritage of God's testimonies. He unfolds the vast estate of spiritual riches contained in God's Word, Covenant, and the person of Jesus Christ, urging believers to take possession of this inheritance by faith and diligence. Spurgeon emphasizes the eternal security and everlasting joy that come from holding fast to this divine heritage, encouraging all to rejoice in the unending blessings of God's grace.

Transcript

"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Psalm 119:111.

WHEN David wrote these words, he was not in a condition of ease and luxury. He was not in a position of assured safety, for he says in the 109th verse, "My soul is continually in my hand." You know what we mean when we say that a man carries his life in his hand—that is to say, he expects death, he is in imminent peril—and may, at any moment, be cut off from his fellows. It was when David was in such a condition as that, hunted, as he tells us in another place, like a partridge upon the mountains, that he could say, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." He was rich in his poverty, he was enthroned in his exile, he was happy in his sorrow and they who have enjoyed a similar experience in their times of distress know how this can be!

I. With no further preface, I want to talk to you about our text under four heads, the first of which will be, LET US MAKE A MAP OF THIS ESTATE—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

There was David's heritage, that portion of goods that fell to him, that piece of goodly land that was his lot—"Your testimonies." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot draw a complete map of this estate, it is so large, so wonderful, but, thank God, you can go and see it for yourselves! Walk over its broad acres, lie down in its green pastures, rest beside its still waters. It is, indeed, a wealthy country that is described in

those two words, "Your testimonies."

But what does the Psalmist mean by this declaration? He means, first, that he had a heritage of truth in the testimonies of God. A man's mind is rich very much in proportion to the truth he knows. He who knows the Word of God is mentally rich—he has a large heritage. There are persons, I am told—deists—who believe in God, but who do not believe in the Word of God. They believe, then, in a god who has never spoken, a silent god, a god who has, at any rate, never spoken to his noblest creatures most capable of understanding his mind. To them, God is One who remains locked up forever in exclusiveness, except so far as His works may reveal Him. I think there are many difficulties in the way of receiving such a theory as that. Whatever difficulties there may be about God having spoken to us and given us testimonies—and that is the meaning of the word in our text—there are none so great to overcome as this one would be, that, through all these ages, so many men have sought after God and so many craving hearts have yearned to find God, yet He should have suffered six thousand years, at least, to pass, and should never have spoken to men a single word that they can understand!

Now, so far from accepting that theory, I believe this Word of God to be God's testimony, God's speech, God's declaration about Himself and about many other things that His creatures need to know—God's witness-bearing to us, out of the depth of His Divine Knowledge—that we may know and understand and see things aright. And I say, and I am sure that many of you will say with me, these speeches of God, these Revelations of God which I find in these two Books of the Old and the New Testaments are my heritage. I rejoice to accept them as the estate of my mind, the treasure of my thought, the mint of the heavenly realm, the mine from which I can explore fresh veins of thought as long as I live, claiming all as my heritage forever! I have been preaching the Word of God these 26 years in this one place to very much the same congregation all the while and if I had been obliged to preach from any other book, I would have worn it threadbare by this time! But the Bible is as fresh to me, today, as when first I began to speak from it as a boy, and preached to you from it as a youth. It is an inexhaustible heritage of mental wealth to the man who will accept it and give his mind to the study of it.

Look at the doctrines, the precepts, the promises, the prophecies, the histories, the experiences—it is no use for me to try to map out this estate, it is so large! As a great heritage of mental wealth, it makes every man who receives it, however illiterate he may be upon other subjects, a wealthy man spiritually, while they who discard it become poverty-stricken in mind, whatever else of mental attainments they may possess. That is the first meaning of our text, God's testimonies are a heritage of truth to the man who receives them.

The next meaning is that God's Covenant is our heritage. The word, "testimonies," may be understood to mean, and it does mean, God's Covenant. When the Lord Jehovah entered into Covenant with men, He made a testimony to them that He would do this and that—His testimony made the Covenant—and the Covenant was His testimony to men. Now, I can say, and many of you can say with me, I have taken God's Covenant to be my heritage forever. And what a heritage that Covenant is, dear Friends! This is one of its clauses, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." This is another clause in the Covenant, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

Again we read, "This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." If I took the whole range of the Covenant, one entire night would not be sufficient time in which to explain it—I would need seven weeks full of seven sermons a day before I could even go round the fringe of the Covenant! Therefore, well might David say that within the compass of that Covenant he found a heritage which he had taken to himself to be his, forever—to be the rejoicing of his heart.

I have not, however, yet brought out all the meaning of our text, or shown you the full map of the estate that is here named, "your testimonies." The greatest testimony of God in all the world is Jesus Christ. He is God's testimony embodied. God said to us, "If you want to know what I am, look, there is My Son." And Jesus came and said, "He that has seen the Son has seen the Father." Jesus Christ is God's testimony against sin, for Christ died through our sin. He is God's testimony concerning Divine Love, for God so loved us that He gave His Son to die for us. In Christ you will find that the more you study Him, the more you will see what the invisible God is, for He is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Now, Beloved, I can say, and many of you can say, "We have taken the Lord Jesus Christ to be our heritage forever"—we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus—Christ is all and in all to us. When we once get Christ, we get everything! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?"

Now, take the testimonies mentioned in our text to be God's Word, God's Covenant, God's Son and there you have a map of your great estate, your goodly heritage. Oh, may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, make us to be so enchanted with this estate, so enraptured with this Divine property, that we shall never rest until we enter into full and final possession of it—and find it to be the rejoicing of our heart!

II. Secondly, I want you to proceed to TAKE POSSESSION OF THE ESTATE. What did David say? "Your testimonies have I taken." He had taken possession of them and our next enquiry must be, how can we take possession of them?

I need not, this evening, repeat what I did this morning. You remember how I went to our friend, behind me, and offered him my hand and he took it? [Sermon #1964, Volume 33—Why Is Faith so Feeble?] Now, this blessed estate of Divine Grace is as free to any soul who is willing to have it as a shake of my hand was to my friend when he grasped it this morning! The Gospel of Grace is as free as the air you breathe—

"None are excluded hence but those

Who do, themselves, exclude."

If the door is ever shut, you have shut it yourselves! This blessed estate is for every man who is willing to take it. How, then, am I to take it?

Well, first, by a deliberate choice. David said to the Lord, "Your testimonies have I taken by my own deliberate choice, I have elected to make them my life's chief treasure." I, too, can say, "Because God has chosen me, I have chosen Him. I have deliberately chosen His Book to be my guide, His Covenant to be my trust, His Son to be my Savior." And I know that there are many of you, here, who can make that

choice, tonight, because you have made it for many years. Would you change your Bible for anything written by man? Would you change the Covenant for any other compact? Would you change your Savior for any other? God forbid! We have taken God's testimonies to be our heritage forever—willingly, by His Grace, choosing His Grace, being first chosen by Him and, therefore, choosing Him in return!

Next to our choice of God's testimonies comes the act of faith which is a personal grip of them. After I had preached in this place one morning, there was a sinner convinced of sin and led to tremble before God. He saw his brother after the service and he asked him, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe," he said. "Well, Brother," he said, "I always did believe! I always have believed the things that are preached and the things that are in the Bible. What more am I to do?" His brother answered, "Why, take them! Grasp them as your own." "I never saw that before," said the man, and so he was brought into the Light of God! Now, that is faith! Faith is the hand that grips the Savior and holds Him fast! There is a book. I believe it to be a hymnbook. I need a hymnbook in order to give out a hymn, so I take it up and use it for its own purpose. There is Christ. I believe Him to be a Savior and I need a Savior. I take Him as a Savior to save me—that is faith! Can you believe that Christ can save you and that He will? Then believe it! "I believe that He has saved my mother." Yes, but that is not saving faith. "I believe that He can save my sister." True, but that is not saving faith. Do you believe for yourself that He can save you? And will you stake your immortal existence upon His power to save you? Will you just rest on Him, sink or swim? If you will do that, you shall swim! He never sank who rested on the Lord Jesus Christ! Well, then, that is the way to take this inheritance, to take it by the grip of faith and say, "It is mine!"

"But suppose I were to take it," says one, "and it should not be mine?" That never happened yet, and never will, for Jesus, Himself, said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." No man ever yet took Jesus Christ by mistake! If you will have Him, you have Him, and He will never say no to you. Take Him and He takes you at the same time. May God grant that you may understand that Truth of God and put it in to practice at once! Thus let us proceed to take this estate by deliberate choice and by appropriating faith.

After we have done that, the next thing is to take the full possession of this estate by holy diligence. He that believes in Christ has the Everlasting Covenant—he has God's testimonies—they are all his, but he does not yet fully enjoy them. I know a friend who has an estate over which I am pretty sure he has never fully walked, for it is so large. He has climbed the highest hill, but he cannot possibly have seen half the property that belongs to him! There are many such estates that the owners have not fully seen and there is not a Christian, here, who has ever seen a tenth part of what belongs to him! In the exercise of this holy diligence, you and I have to take possession of the Word of God by studying it more earnestly, to take possession of the Covenant by believing it more fully and to take possession of Christ by communing with Him more closely and using Him more constantly, so that we may say with David, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

Keep on taking, keep on taking, keep on taking! You know the story that is told about the hymn, "More to follow"—how Mr. Rowland Hill, having determined to give to some poor minister a hundred pounds, sent him £5 and wrote in the envelope, "More to follow." To his surprise, at the end of a month, there came another one with, "More to follow," and so it kept on, time after time, till the amount was all given. That is the pity of it—it was all given, some time or other. "More to follow" came to an end. But it is never so with God! With Him it is, "always more to follow." From strength to strength, from joy to joy, from Grace to Grace, we still go on till we come to Heaven—and I suppose, that even there we shall still go on and on in everlasting progress scaling successive heights of bliss! We shall continue to become fuller of glory, or, if

always full, yet we shall be made more capacious, that the fullness may be still greater. "Your testimonies have I taken." Go on taking them, Brothers and Sisters, take them to be your heritage forever!

I wish that I could hope that everybody here had, by deliberate choice, by appropriating faith and by holy diligence, taken all the Covenant of God, all the Revelation of God and all the Christ of God to be his heritage forever!

III. Now, thirdly, LET US CONSIDER THE HOLDING. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

You see what kind of holding we have of this heritage. It is not leasehold, a shorter term every night we go to bed. It is not even a holding similar to that which is commonly used in Scotland, when the lease is for 999 years. No, it is a perpetual holding—"Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." Well, dear Friend, that is long enough, is it not? What else will you ever take on such a tenancy as that? That is a freehold! "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever."

"Well," says one, "I have a freehold." Yes, but you will not be free to hold it forever. You may be a freeholder, my dear Sir, but you will have to go and your heir will step into your place! Somebody else will walk those acres and call your home his own—you have only a life-lease of it at the very outside. It is delightful to think that this inheritance of the Word of God, the Covenant of God, the Christ of God, we have forever because we shall live forever and we shall hold it forever! It is not dependent upon any one life—it is dependent upon three lives—and those three lives are the life of the Father, the life of the Son and the life of the Holy Spirit! And they are all eternal—and so shall the joy and the wealth of every Believer be! We have taken this inheritance forever.

Sometimes we possess certain things which are ours, completely ours, but then they are not ours forever because they fade. But our inheritance will never fade or pass away. The crown that was won at the Greek games, though made of amaranth, would yet return to dust before long. There is nothing here on earth but is touched by the moon, and is ready to wane and to depart. There is nothing here that can be held forever, even if we could live here forever to hold it, for all things perish in the using. But this is a crown of life that fades not away, this is a heritage which, after a million years, shall be the same as it is now in fullness of joyful satisfaction! O you people who only think about what you are going to do tomorrow, or about what you will do during the next, well, say 50 years! You sometimes say, "It will be all the same a 100 years from now." Yes, but suppose it is—what will it be a thousand years hence? Why, some, I hope, will have been in Heaven 950 years by that time! Oh, what joy we shall have known during that period! What breakings of the sea of bliss over our enraptured spirits!

But suppose any of us shall have been in Hell all that time? Oh, ghastly thought! But what must it be to have been in Heaven a million years and then to feel that we are but at the beginning of our bliss? "I give unto My sheep eternal life." "Because I live, you shall live, also." The righteous shall go into life eternal! Oh, the splendor of eternity linked with bliss! I beseech you, dear Friends, rejoice if you have taken this heritage that you have taken it forever, for it is that which makes the joy of it!

We have to reckon earthly things and say, "That is the value of the property; take it at 20 years' purchase, or 25 years' purchase." But what must be the value of a blessing that is to last forever and ever? I have sometimes thought what it would be to have a toothache to all eternity. That would be bad enough, for it is the eternity that makes the sting of it. But what can we say of a joy that will last when yonder sun is turned into a coal and the moon is black as a sackcloth of hair, and this old world, wrinkled like a bottle in the

smoke, shall be flung away as worn-out and useless? You and I, then, in the everlasting youth of a God-given life, shall possess this heritage forever!

Once more, notice that there is no way of taking this heritage except taking it forever. There is a way invented by some men of being temporary Christians. It is believed by some that you can take this heritage for three months, or that you can take it for a certain term of years, and then lay it down. They take it not at all who do not take it forever! He that enlists in the army of Christ must enlist forever—that is the shortest term on which Christ will take him. If you become a Christian, you must always be a Christian! I heard of a Brother, the other day, a teetotaler, who had been an abstainer, he said, "ten years, off and on." Yes, you may well smile at that remark, but there are some people who want to be Christians of that kind, "off and on." My dear Friends, the members of the Total Abstinence Society are ready to get up and say that they will not admit that man, and I say the same about a Christian man who is "off and on!" No, no! We go in for salvation forever! As David says, "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." You cannot take them any other way. That conversion which is not radical and thorough is of no use. If a man converts you, another man can un-convert you! But if God converts you, I know that what God does shall be forever! He does not make temporary Christians, but real, lasting, everlasting Christians, as our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Will you have this heritage for this term? Will you have it forever? Then take it and welcome! May God Himself, by His Divine Spirit, make you an heir of endless life through faith in Jesus Christ His Son!

IV. But not to weary you, I shall close by inviting you, in the last place, to ENJOY, AT ONCE, THE POSSESSION. "Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." First, that was an evidence that David had taken God's testimonies to be his possession, for they had made him glad. And, secondly, that was the reason why he took them to be his possession—because they made him glad.

Now, first, this was a proof that they were his, because they made his heart rejoice. If your religion does not make you rejoice, it is not worth much. If you do not find a joy in it, you have not really taken it, you have not taken it forever, or, at least, though you may have taken such religion as you have, you have not taken the testimonies of God, the Covenant of Grace, the Christ of God, for if you had done so, you must rejoice! One said to me, the other day, speaking of the new style of ministers and the old style, "I used to notice, in the old preachers, that they seemed delighted with what they had to say—even if we did not enjoy it, they did. They seemed like men that set out a feast and, every now and then, they had a taste, themselves, they so enjoyed the Truths of God they were preaching. But," he said, "the modern gentlemen—well, they know that it is a poverty-stricken country through which they are traveling. They are pretty well aware that there is no spiritual food for the people and so they do not even appear to enjoy the service, themselves, but they get through it in a sadly dignified way—an amazing way, indeed, showing their own talent and wisdom—but there is no hearty enjoyment of it."

And it is so! But when a man has taken God's testimonies to be his everlasting heritage, when you hear him talk about it, his eyes begin to flash, his soul is all on fire, he is full of gladness over it! The genuine convert, too, who has found the Savior, did you ever know him to come see a Christian, and say to him, "Dear Friend, I think that I have believed in Jesus Christ. I think—I think that, perhaps, He has pardoned my sin"? Why, you say, that man is not up to the mark! As soon as ever a genuine convert comes to open his mouth, he says, "Oh, dear Sir, I hope that I have found the Savior! I do feel so happy, for I have laid my

sins on Jesus, and He has appeared to me, and He has said, 'I have blotted out all your transgressions.' I am so happy that—if I talk too fast, pray do excuse me—but I have passed from death to life and I must tell somebody about the wondrous change! I can say with David, 'Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever,' I know I have done so, for they make my very heart glad! They warm my spirit! They are the rejoicing of my heart!"

You notice David does not merely say, "they make my heart rejoice," but he says, "they are the rejoicing of my heart." He does not merely say, "they give me joy, but they are my joy, they are essentially and really the delight of my spirit." Oh, what a difference it makes, when the man has truly taken Christ as his Savior, in the way in which he looks at his religion! Until you have taken the Covenant, the testimonies and the Christ of God to be your inheritance, you may be, after a fashion, deeply pious, and yet sadly miserable over your piety. Your religion may be as sweet to you as slavery was to a Negro, and not a whit more so. But when you have taken Christ to be yours—

"'Tis love that makes your willing feet In swift obedience move."

It is love that makes you joyful in God and, being joyful in God, nothing is too hard or too heavy for you, and you say, with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." Our feet are made like hinds' feet to leap over difficulties when we have really taken a firm grip of the eternal Truths of God and have taken them to be our heritage forever. It is one of the evidences of Grace when these things are the rejoicing of our heart.

Then, lastly, another way of looking at this Truth of God is this—we take these things to be our heritage because they are the joy of our heart. Dear Friends I would like to refresh the memories of some of you Christian people by recalling your past experience. When you have been very ill, what has your religion been to you, then? I know that you can say, "I almost wish to be ill, again, to enjoy the rest, and the peace, and the delight that I had then!" When my dear Brother, William Olney, behind me, was undergoing most painful operations, I went to see him and I never saw him more happy than he was, then! I do not believe he was happier when he was going to be married than he was when he was awaiting the coming of the surgeon. He was so resting in God, so rejoicing in Christ, that he could not be more delighted than he was! His Master's Presence made him full of gladness!

Others of us know what it is to lie on the verge of death by the week together—and in the stillness of the night to contemplate very closely our approaching end—and to do so as deliberately as if we expected to rise the next morning to transact our business, regarding the eternal state, with hope and desire rather than with fear! We are glad to find that when heart and flesh failed, then there burnt within us another light that no man has ever kindled, another joy than corn and wine and oil can ever give to him who has the largest store of them! O dear Friends, I bear my own personal testimony that there is no joy like that of believing the testimonies of God, accepting the Covenant of Grace and living upon the Christ of God!

I have often said from this pulpit, and I say it again, that if I had to die like a dog, I would wish to be a Christian even for the blessings of this life! But then, of course, it is the life to come that makes the joy of this present life, for if that were blotted out, we might be, of all men, most miserable, for we have more than enough of trial and of sadness if it were not for the thought of the world to come! But that life beyond, that hope that enters within the veil, that vision of Christ's face, that prospect of being forever with the Lord—I would part with all the joys of sense to behold His face but for a moment! What must it be to be in His Presence—in fullness of joy, forever and ever? The expectation of that which is soon to be revealed

makes us exceedingly glad.

"Why!" one says, "I thought that Christian people were all miserable people?' It is because you do not know them! And there is another thing you do not know, some of you, that is, how Christians can rejoice. You see, that elder brother, who was such a very proper sort of gentleman, was angry at the rejoicing over the prodigal's return and, "he would not go in." I do not know whether he did go in, after all, but if he did not, he could not tell how merry his father was, he could not tell how merry the servants were, he could not tell how happy was his younger brother who had been lost and now was found! He was angry and would not go in, so he could not know what joy there was in the home. But if he could have gone in with his cruel, cold-blooded temperament and could have looked on—and if he could have caught sight of his brother who had been so lately with the hogs, but who was now washed and cleansed, feasting on that fatted calf—I think his heart would have begun to melt, as Joseph's did when he saw Benjamin. Then, if he had seen the joy of the servants and heard the music, and watched the dancing, I think he would have been ready to take a turn with them!

If he had fixed his eyes on his father and had seen the greatness of his father's love, and the joy beaming in his father's face, I think that he would have rushed up to him and fallen on his father's neck, and kissed him, and said, "Now I know what a blessed thing it must be to dwell in your love." Oh, if you knew the joy of saved sinners, and the joys of those who have prayed and labored for their salvation. If you knew anything of the joy of the happy God, you would understand that a truly Christian life cannot be an unhappy one! God bring you, everyone, to trust in Jesus, His dear Son! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 119:73-88.

In this Psalm we have, as it were, notes from David's diary.

Verse 73. Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Your Commandments. This is a very instructive prayer. The Psalmist does as good as say, "Lord, You have made me once—make me over again. You have made my body—mold my spirit, form my character, give me understanding." If God should make us, and then leave us without understanding, what imperfect creations we would be! A man devoid of understanding is only a blood and bone creation and, therefore, the Psalmist does well to pray, "Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding." But what sort of an understanding is desired? That I may learn to discuss and dispute? No, "that I may learn Your Commandments," for holiness is the best of wisdom and the surest proof of a right understanding is obedience to God's Commandments.

74. They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word. A hopeful godly man is a continual source of joy to other people. When a man can inspire hope in his fellows—and he cannot do that unless he is full of hope, himself—he lights a fire of comfort. Bring such a man into a storm and he helps you to be brave. "They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word."

75. I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me. We are glad to listen to a man who can tell us that—an old man, a tried man who can say that God has been faithful in afflicting him—a man who, after having borne the brunt of tribulation, can yet bless God for it. Such testimonies as these are full of joy and gladness to the young folk—they can encounter trial with a joyous heart when they hear what their fathers tell of the goodness of God to them in their troubles!

76. Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant. "Lord," he seems to say, "I have been a comfort to others—be You a comfort to me. You have made others glad to see me, make me glad with the recollection of all my experience of Your mercy. 'Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort.'" If you have lost your own comfort, dear Friends, see where you are to look for it—to the merciful kindness of God! Those are two beautiful words, are they not? "Merciful"—take that to pieces and it is mercy-full. Is not God full of mercy? Take the next word to pieces—"kindness." That means, "kinned-ness"—that kind of feeling that we have to our own kin when they are very dear to us. "Lord, let Your mercy-full kinned-ness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant."

77. Let Your tender mercies come unto me, that I may live. "I am so broken down, my bones are so full of pain, that if You handle me roughly, I shall die. 'Let Your tender mercies come unto me.' I am like a poor flower whose stalk is almost broken through, ready to droop and die. Let Your tender mercies bind me up, that I may live."

77. For Your Law is my delight. God will not let a man die who delights in His Law! You are the sort of man who shall live. If you love the Law of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God, He will not let you die! There are none too many of your sort in the world, so the Lord will keep you alive so long as you can serve Him here.

78. Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts. That is a delightful turning of the subject—"They dealt perversely with me, without a cause"—but David does not say, "I will envy the proud," or, "I will be spiteful to them," or, "I will fret myself because of them." No, he seems to say, "They may do what they will, but I will meditate in Your precepts." When anyone has treated you contemptuously, or dealt perversely with you without a cause, instead of resenting it, get to your Bible! Meditate in God's precepts! It is the noblest and, at the same time, the most successful way of fighting against contempt, so to despise the despising of men as to rejoice in your thoughts of God and His Truth!

79. Let those that fear You turn unto me, and those that have known Your testimonies. "Lord, make me such a man that they who fear You may seek my acquaintance. Of Your great mercy grant that if any of them have turned away from me through hearing slanderous reports about me, they may be inclined, now, to come back to me, for I love them, and I would not willingly offend them. 'Let those that fear You turn unto me.'"

80. Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I am not ashamed. When the heart is right with God, there will be no need to be ashamed. Though you may make some mistakes and blunders, because you are human, yet, if you are sincere, shame shall not overtake you. What a blessing it is to have a sound heart! But when the heart is spiritually unsound, the profession is always in danger. The other day a friend of ours was taken from us almost in an instant through heart disease—and when Judas sells his Master, or when Demas turns aside to the silver mines of earth, it is the result of heart disease. There are many who go about in the Christian Church with a ruddy face and apparently with great strength of religion—but all of a sudden they prove apostates. Yes, that is the effect of heart disease! Therefore, pray very earnestly with the Psalmist, "Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I be not ashamed."

81. My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word. What? Faint and hoping, too? Yes, a Christian is a wonder and a contradiction to many, but most of all to himself! He cannot understand

himself. He faints and yet he hopes. Two apparently opposite emotions may be at the same time in the Christian bosom! Every man is two men, if he is a man in Christ Jesus. I sometimes think that there is a triplet of characters in every man of God, so that he has three different experiences at the same time. Certainly he can have two, for here we have them—"My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word."

82. My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me? "I look for it till my eyes ache! I strain my eyes to see Your Word, watching for it till my vision grows dull in waiting! 'My eyes fail for Your Word, saying.'" Oh, then, his eyes could speak! Yes, eyes can say a great many things! And blessed are the eyes that have learned to say this—"When will You comfort me?" It is a good way of praying, sometimes, to say nothing at all, but to sit still and look up. The eyes can say what lips and tongue cannot, so learn well the language of the eyes and talk to God with them, even as He talks to you with His eyes. "I will guide you," He says, "with My eye." Be you, therefore, able to speak to God with your eyes, as David was when he wrote, "My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will you comfort me?"

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke. An old dried-up skin bottle that is hung in the smoke of the tent over the fire till it is wrinkled and cracked—and almost good for nothing.

83. Yet do I not forget Your statutes. "Beauty is gone, strength is gone, comeliness is gone, but not my memory of Your Word, O Lord." What a mercy it is that when the worst comes to the worst with us, still the best remains—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes."

84. How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me? "Lord, I have but a short life; let me not have a long affliction." Does he mean, "Lord, I have lived too long in this miserable state; I wish my days were shortened"? We must not murmur at the length of our days, but we may plead that persecution may come to an end. We may even go so far as to say with David, "How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?"

85. The proud have dug pits for me which are not after Your Law. It is not often that proud men take to digging, but here, you see, these children of the Pit learn to dig pits for God's people—and they still have not given up the practice! Pits were dug in olden times to catch wild beasts, but now, often, the wicked dig pits to try to catch good men, seeking, if they can, to make a fault where there is none, or to lead us into a line of conduct which they shall be able to represent unfavorably—"The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law."

86. All Your Commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me. What a prayer that is! Store it up for use, dear Friend! Carry it home with you. That is the kind of prayer to be prayed on the roadside, in a railway carriage, yes, even in an accident—"Help You me." "Help You me," is a wonderful prayer! It seems to turn on a swivel whichever way you wish—you may use it to ask for anything you need in every time of emergency—"Help You me."

87. They had almost consumed me upon earth. "They had almost eaten me up; they had almost burned my life out. Blessed be God, they could not consume me anywhere except upon earth! My immortal part would escape the burning of their coals of juniper! They had almost consumed me, but almost is not altogether." When God delivers His people from the lion and the bear, the jaws of the wild beasts may be almost closed, yet they shall be opened wide enough for us to escape! "They had almost consumed me upon earth."

87. But I forsook not Your precepts. You cleave to the right and God will not turn away from you, nor will He let you turn away from His precepts.

88. Quicken me after Your lovingkindness. That is a blessed prayer for us to offer. If any of you feel dull and drowsy. If any of you are heavy and slow in your movements, cry to the Lord, "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

88. So shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth. Spiritual life is the root of holiness—"Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth." May God bless this reading to our instruction! Amen.

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