***The Righteous Love of God***

**Meeting God in the Psalms: Psalm 9 November 7, 2021**

***I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;  
I will tell of your wonders . . . .  
The Lord has reigned forever;   
he has established his throne for judgment.  
He will judge the world in righteousness;  
he will govern the peoples with justice.*Psalm 9:1, 7-8**

**Reading Psalm 9**

A. Individual Praise (vv. 1–2)

B. Judgment on the Wicked: A worldwide perspective (vv. 3–6)

C. Hope in God’s Just Rule – even during seasons of tribulation (vv. 7–10)

A′. Communal Praise (vv. 11–12)

B′. Judgment of the Wicked: My prayer (vv. 13–18)

C′. Hope in God’s Just Rule and my part in it! (vv. 19–20)

1. Psalm 9, with Psalm 10, forms an imperfect acrostic – both tell the story of God’s triumph over evil

2. Psalm 9 turns our attention to how God works among the nations

3. Practice listening for the Jesus resonance in Psalm 9:

-- God’s nature revealed in his “wonders”

-- salvation guaranteed by God’s righteousness

“If God were to wait until we – by our faith, our virtues, and good works . . . –   
had made ourselves worthy, in part or in whole, to receive his favor, the restoration   
of communion between him and ourselves would never happen, and salvation would forever be out of reach for us.” Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics

-- Jesus’ future (and present!) reign in righteousness

**Beginning with my response of praise**

1 I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;

I will tell of all your wonders.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in you;

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

3 My enemies turn back; they stumble and perish before you.

4 For you have upheld my right and my cause;

you have sat on your throne, judging righteously.

Psalm 9

1. In this lament, the psalmist \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with praise

2. God’s “wonders” are the ways we see his character at work:

-- God’s redemption miracles in Psalms (see 106:7,22; also Job 5:9, 9:10 and Exodus 3:20, 34:10)

-- God’s good work in our lives (Psalm 71:17 and the refrain of Psalm 107)

-- expressed powerfully in his Word (Psalm 119:18,27) and creation (Psalm 139:14)

3. In the psalms, God’s righteousness is less forensic and more relational

**What I learn about the tough side of God’s *hesed* love**

7 The Lord reigns forever;

he has established his throne for judgment.

8 He will judge the world in righteousness;

he will govern the peoples with justice.

9 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,

a stronghold in times of trouble.

10 Those who know your name will trust in you,

for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 9

1. God’s reign has always been a special place for us “oppressed”

-- righteousness (*tsedek*, “honest” in Lev. 19:36; Prov. 12:17; “justice” in Eccl. 3:16; Isaiah 59:4)

-- justice (*mesarim* or *mishpat*, “fair” in Prov. 1:3; 2:9; “equity” in Psalm 96:10; 98:9)

2. God’s *hesed*  royal love is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ without his justice (see HC Lord’s Day 9)

3. God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the blessing (see Spurgeon’s “Dilemma and Deliverance”)

**Getting ready for God’s justice to reign**

13 O Lord, see how my enemies persecute me!

Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,

14 that I may declare your praises in the gates of the Daughter of Zion

and there rejoice in your salvation.

15 The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug;

their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.

16 The Lord is known by his justice;

the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands. *Higgaion.* *Selah*

17 The wicked return to the grave,

all the nations that forget God.

18 But the needy will not always be forgotten,

nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish.

19 Arise, O Lord, let not man triumph;

let the nations be judged in your presence.

20 Strike them with terror, O Lord;

let the nations know they are but men. *Selah*

Psalm 9:13-20

1. Praise begins \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the congregation

2. Sin carries its own penalty

28 *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.*

Romans 1

3. Lament is missional – there is always a focus on the nations (and it’s not all judgment!)

*“The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations;*

*the Gentiles will hope in him.”*

Romans 15:12 (quoting Isaiah 11:10)

4. I am invited to join in Messiah’s righteousness project – don’t forget the needy

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

Matthew 5

Diagram, engineering drawing

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**Resources for the Psalms**

Please be sure to have a copy of the [Bible Project’s poster](https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/) on the Psalms.

I appreciate the [*bibestudytools.com*](https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/christ-centered-exposition/psalms51-100/the-city-of-god.html)study of Psalm 87 in the “Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary” series. I’ve attached this study to my notes.

Dr. [Ron Allen has a wonderful study](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/19-Psalms/Text/Articles/Allen-Ps87-BS.pdf) of Psalm 87 in “Biblioteca Sacra”.

James E. Smith’s *Wisdom Literature and Psalms* (College Press, 1995) has been a very helpful resource.

The *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1991) has a helpful commentary on the Psalms.

I can see Dr. Ron Allen’s influence in the study notes on the Psalms in the *Nelson Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 1997). This is a NKJV text Bible which gives a wonderful new translation to read.

Enduring Word has a good intro to Psalm 9 at [*https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-9/*](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-9/)

Tabletalk has a wonderful article on Psalm 118 at [*https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/reading-the-psalms-with-luther/*](https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/reading-the-psalms-with-luther/)

See Spurgeon’s Psalm 9 sermons “Tender and Terrible” at [*https://www.spurgeongems.org/*](https://www.spurgeongems.org/)and “Dilemma and Deliverance” at [*https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons06/sermons06.ii.html*](https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons06/sermons06.ii.html)

I’ve included thoughts on God’s righteousness by Herman Bavinck and B. A. Milne in the *New Bible Dictionary* (IVP).

John Samson’s blog has a wonderful interview with Pastor Elly Achok Olare at <http://effectualgrace.com/2017/03/07/psalm-91-and-the-word-of-faith/>

**Psalm 9 (NIV)**

For the director of music. To the tune of “The Death of the Son.” A psalm of David.

1 I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;

I will tell of all your wonders.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in you;

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

3 My enemies turn back;

they stumble and perish before you.

4 For you have upheld my right and my cause;

you have sat on your throne, judging righteously.

5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;

you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.

6 Endless ruin has overtaken the enemy,

you have uprooted their cities;

even the memory of them has perished.

7 The Lord reigns forever;

he has established his throne for judgment.

8 He will judge the world in righteousness;

he will govern the peoples with justice.

9 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,

a stronghold in times of trouble.

10 Those who know your name will trust in you,

for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

11 Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.

12 For he who avenges blood remembers;

he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted.

13 O Lord, see how my enemies persecute me!

Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,

14 that I may declare your praises

in the gates of the Daughter of Zion

and there rejoice in your salvation.

15 The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug;

their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.

16 The Lord is known by his justice;

the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands. *Higgaion.* *Selah*

17 The wicked return to the grave,

all the nations that forget God.

18 But the needy will not always be forgotten,

nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish.

19 Arise, O Lord, let not man triumph;

let the nations be judged in your presence.

20 Strike them with terror, O Lord;

let the nations know they are but men. *Selah*

"To correctly assess the benefit of justification, people must lift up their minds to the judgment seat of God and put themselves in his presence. When they compare themselves with others or measure themselves by the standard they apply to themselves or among each other, they have some reason perhaps to pride themselves in something and to put their trust in it. But when they put themselves before the face of God and examine themselves in the mirror of his holy law, all their conceit collapses, all self-confidence melts, and there is room left only for the prayer: “Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you” (Job 4:17-19; 9:2; 15:14-16; Ps. 143:2; cf.130:3), and there only comfort is that “there is forgiveness before you, so that you may be revered” (Ps. 130:4). If for insignificant, guilty, and impure persons there is to be a possibility of true religion, that is, of genuine fellowship with God, of salvation and eternal life, then God on his part must reestablish the broken bond, again take them into fellowship with him and share his grace with them, regardless of their guilt and corruption. He, then, must descend from the height of his majesty, seek us out and come to us, take away our guilt and again open the way to his fatherly heart. If God were to wait until we – by our faith, our virtues, and good works…- had made ourselves worthy, in part or in whole, to receive his favor, the restoration of communion between him and ourselves would never happen, and salvation would forever be out of reach for us."  
**- Herman Bavinck,.** Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 4: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 204-205

**RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Heb. *ṣeḏeq, ṣ eḏāqâ*; Gk. lxx and NT, *dikaiosynē*). The Heb. *ṣeḏeq* probably derives from an Arab. root meaning ‘straightness’, leading to the notion of an action which conforms to a norm. There is, however, a considerable richness in the biblical understanding of this term and it is difficult to render either the Heb. or Gk. words concerned by a simple Eng. equivalent. One basic ingredient in the OT idea of righteousness is relationship, both between God and man (Ps. 50:6; Je. 9:24) and between man and man (Dt. 24:13; Je. 22:3).

Referred to relations between men, righteous action is action which conforms to the requirements of the relationship and in a more general sense promotes the well-being and peace of the community (1 Sa. 24:17; Pr. 14:34). It is therefore linked in a forensic sense with \*justice though even then the idea is less that of conformity to some formal legal norm as the strongly ethical notion of action which is to be legally upheld because it is productive of communal well-being (Dt. 1:16; Am. 5:7). In the prophetic period righteousness comes to include the idea of helping the poor and needy (Dn. 4:27; Am. 5:12, 24), and hence almsgiving (Mt. 6:1f.).

When we move from relations between men to those between God and men (though this distinction is arguably somewhat formal since the thought of God was probably never completely absent whenever the Hebrew used the word *ṣeḏeq*) righteousness implies a correct relationship to the will of God which was particularly expressed and interpreted by Israel’s covenant with God. Righteous action is hence action which flows out of God’s gracious election of Israel and accords with the law of the covenant (Dt. 6:25; Ezk. 18:5–9). God himself is righteous (2 Ch. 12:6; Ps. 7:9), and hence may be relied upon to act in accordance with the terms of his relationship with Israel. God is therefore a righteous judge who acts for his people (Ps. 9:4; Je. 11:20), and upon whose righteousness his people depend for deliverance and vindication (Ps. 31:1; Je. 11:20).

Thus emerges the conflation of the notions of righteousness and salvation. God is ‘a righteous God and (therefore) a Saviour’ (Is. 45:21; *cf.* Ps. 36:6; Is. 61:10). For the OT God is Creator and therefore he is the ground and guarantor of the moral order. His righteousness is hence intimately related to other more general moral attributes such as his holiness. The Creator, however, is also the Redeemer, and his righteousness is interpreted by his redemptive activity. Further, Israel’s experience of God’s righteous deliverance in the past led her to an expectation of a future act of salvation. The coming Messianic ruler is seen as the special recipient and instrument of the divine righteousness (Ps. 72:1f.; Is. 11:3–5; 32:1–20; Je. 23:5). The ‘Righteous One’ was a Messianic title (Is. 53:11; *cf.* Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14).

The NT uses righteousness in the sense of conformity to the demands and obligations of the will of God, the so-called ‘righteousness of the law’ (Gal. 3:21; Phil. 3:6, 9; *cf.* Tit. 3:5). Human attainment of righteousness is at points relatively positively viewed (Lk. 1:6; 2:25; Mt. 5:20), but in the end this attainment in all men falls far short of a true conformity to the divine will (Rom. 3:9–20; Lk. 18:9–14; Jn. 8:7). In contrast to this human unrighteousness stands the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17) which in consistency with OT understanding conveys the thought of God’s active succour of man in the miracle of his grace.

This righteousness is proclaimed by Jesus as a gift to those who are granted the kingdom of God (Mt. 5:6). By faith in Jesus Christ and his work of atonement man, unrighteous sinner though he is, receives God’s righteousness, *i.e.* he is given a true relationship with God which involves the forgiveness of all sin and a new moral standing with God in union with Christ ‘the Righteous One’ (Rom. 3:21–31; 4:1–25; 10:3; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). By dealing with all the consequences of man’s sin and unrighteousness (both Godward and manward) in the cross, God at once maintains the moral order in which alone he can have fellowship with man *and* in grace delivers the needy (Rom. 3:26).

The gift of God’s righteousness involves entry into the new realm of divine salvation, the gift of eternal life under the reign of God (Rom. 6:12–23; 2 Cor. 6:7, 14; Phil. 1:11; Eph. 4:24). Hence the extrinsic righteousness imputed through the cross finds inevitable expression in the intrinsic righteousness of a life which in a new way conforms to the will of God, even though the ultimate realization of this conformity must await the consummation of the kingdom (1 Jn. 3:2; Phil. 3:12–14; 1 Cor. 13:12f.; 2 Pet. 3:11–13). (\*Justification.)[[1]](#footnote-1)

# [Psalm 9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+9&t=NKJV) – God Remembers, Man Forgets From Enduring Word at [*https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-9/*](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-9/)

*The title of this psalm reads* **To the Chief Musician. To the tune of “Death of the Son.” A Psalm of David**. *The title indicates for us that David wrote this psalm to God Himself (generally regarded as the* “Chief Musician”*) to a popularly known tune in his day (in Hebrew,* Muth Labben*). In this psalm, David celebrates the help and goodness of God with a big vision for the nations.*

*While most believe the title* Muth Labben *refers to a tune, others suggest that it refers to an instrument upon which the song was played. Some (as in the New King James Version) associate the title with the phrase* **The Death of the Son***, and apply that title as the ancient Chaldee version does: “Concerning the death of the Champion who went out between the camps,” referring to Goliath. Perhaps David wrote this psalm remembering the victory over Goliath from the vantage point of many years since that triumph.*

*“From this point in the Psalter up to* [*Psalm 148*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+148&t=NKJV) *the versions differ over the numbering of the psalms, since the* LXX[Septuagint] *and Vulgate, followed by the Roman church, count* [*Psalms 9*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalms+9&t=NKJV) *and* [*10*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalms+9.10&t=NKJV) *as a single poem, while the Protestant churches follow the Hebrew reckoning.”* (Derek Kidner)

### A. Praising God for how He deals with an enemy.

#### 1. (1-2) Singing praises to the God who does great things.

**I will praise *You,* O LORD, with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.  
I will be glad and rejoice in You;  
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.**

a. **I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart**: David recognized that God was worthy of praise with the **whole heart**. His entire being should be directed in affection toward God.

i. “Half heart is no heart.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “We do not praise God with our lips very much, if at all. And when we do, if we do, we praise him halfheartedly…. It is more often true that Christians complain of how God has been treating them, carry on excessively about their personal needs or desires, or gossip.” (Boice)

b. **I will tell of all Your marvelous works**: Here, David described an important and often neglected way to praise God – to **tell of all** His **marvelous works**. Simply remembering and telling the great things God has done is a wonderful way to praise Him.

i. “Christians, so called, when they meet, seldom speak about God! Why is this? Because they have nothing to say.” (Clarke)

ii. **Marvelous works**: “*Wonderful deeds* (or things) is a single Hebrew word, particularly frequent in the Psalms, used especially of the great redemptive miracles (*e.g.* [Psalm 106:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+106.7&t=NKJV), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+106.22&t=NKJV)), but also of their less obvious counterparts in daily experience (*cf.* [Psalm 71:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+71.17&t=NKJV)), and of the hidden glories of Scripture ([Psalm 119:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+119.18&t=NKJV)).” (Kidner)

iii. David could see that “Today is as full of God to this man as the sacred yesterdays of national history, and his deliverances as wonderful as those of old.” (Maclaren)

c. **I will be glad and rejoice in You**: David here described a second way to praise God, by simply finding and expressing gladness and joy **in** God. This is simply choosing to rest in and celebrate the goodness, greatness, and kindness of God.

d. **I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High**: Here, David listed a third way to praise God with the **whole heart**, by *singing***praise** to the **name** of God. The idea is to honor and celebrate the character and nature of God, recognizing Him as the **Most High**.

i. **O Most High**: “God was so first called by Melchizedek, upon a like occasion as here by David, [Genesis 14:19-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+14.19-20&t=NKJV).” (Trapp)

#### 2. (3-5) David praises God for defending him against his enemies.

**When my enemies turn back,  
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.  
For You have maintained my right and my cause;  
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.  
You have rebuked the nations,  
You have destroyed the wicked;  
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.**

a. **When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at Your presence**: In the first two verses of this psalm, David described general reasons for praising God, reasons that are always valid. Now, he recounted a reason more specific to his present circumstances; he praised God for the way that the Most High defeated his **enemies**.

b. **For You have maintained my right and my cause**: David saw God move against his enemies by defending him on the *principle* of right and wrong in his conflict.

i. This shows us that the God of David – that is, the God of the Bible – is not dispassionate regarding right and wrong among men; He is not always neutral in human conflict. It is entirely true that men may *think* God is on their side when He is not, and that it may be that God is against *both* parties in a dispute. Nevertheless, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David could say, “**For You have maintained my right and my cause**.”

ii. Understanding this should not make us automatically claim that God is on *our* side in our battles or disputes; it should rather make us endeavor to be on *God’s side*, by rigorously conforming ourselves to His word.

c. **You sat on the throne…You have rebuked the nations…You have blotted out their name forever and ever**: David saw God in action among **the nations**, righteously judging the wicked.

i. By implication, we see that David also justified and defended the righteous – that is, himself, in the present situation.

ii. “The past tenses of verses 5-8 are ‘prophetic perfects,’ a feature of the Old Testament: they describe coming events as if they have already happened, so certain is their fulfillment and so clear the vision.” (Kidner)

#### 3. (6-8) David celebrates the Lord’s victory.

**O enemy, destructions are finished forever!  
And you have destroyed cities;  
Even their memory has perished.  
But the LORD shall endure forever;  
He has prepared His throne for judgment.  
He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.**

a. **O enemy, destructions are finished forever**: David shifted his focus from speaking directly to the LORD to addressing the enemies whom the LORD had defeated. David assured them that their evil work of destruction would end in futility.

i. “The metaphor of a judgment-seat is exchanged for a triumphant description of the destructions fallen on the land of the enemy, in all which God alone is recognised as the actor.” (Maclaren)

b. **But the LORD shall endure forever**: We might have expected David to set *himself* in contrast to the wicked; yet he was wise and humble enough to know that God would judge the wicked more for being *His own* enemies instead of David’s.

c. **He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness**: David looked forward to the eventual and ultimate rule of God over all nations. This would be the perfect expression of God’s righteous judgment.

i. “The psalm is a great pattern of praise on a far too much neglected level in our day. We praise God much for His mercy. That is right, but it is a good thing to recognize His righteous rule, and to praise Him for that.” (Morgan)

ii. One thousand years after David’s time, the Apostle Paul quoted this line on Mars Hill: **He shall judge the world in righteousness** ([Acts 17:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+17.31&t=NKJV)).

### B. Praising God for how He treats the oppressed.

#### 1. (9-10) God is a trustworthy refuge.

**The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,  
A refuge in times of trouble.  
And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;  
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.**

a. **The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed**: Here, David was grateful that God did more than judge the wicked; He also was a **refuge** and support for those **oppressed** by the wicked.

i. **Times of trouble**: According to Maclaren, this translates a rare word, and “occurs only here and in [Psalm 10:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+10.1&t=NKJV). It means a cutting off, *i.e.*, of hope of deliverance. The notion of distress intensified to despair is conveyed.”

b. **Those who know Your name will put their trust in You**: David understood that the help of God wasn’t given just because God favored some and opposed others. It was because His people *have relationship* with Him (**know Your name**), they have *faith* in Him (**put their trust in You**), and they *seek* Him (**who seek You**).

i. It is a serious trial to the child of God to feel **forsaken** by God. There are particular times when we are likely to feel that the Lord has forsaken us.

·When we have sinned.

·When we face great trouble.

·When we have some great job to do.

·When we feel our prayers are unanswered.

ii. Yet we can find refuge in seeking God, in knowing His name. “To ‘know Thy name’ is here equivalent to learning God’s character as made known by His acts.” (Maclaren)

iii. “We never trust a man till we know him, and bad men are better known than trusted. Not so the Lord, for where his name is poured out as an ointment, there the virgins love him, fear him, rejoice in him, repose upon him.” (Trapp)

iv. “Men complain of their little faith: the remedy is in their own hands; let them set themselves to know God…. But for all this, you must make time. You cannot know a friend from hurried interviews, much less God. So you must steep yourself in deep, long thoughts of his nearness and his love.” (Meyer)

#### 2. (11-12) Singing praise to the God who remembers His people.

**Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!  
Declare His deeds among the people.  
When He avenges blood, He remembers them;  
He does not forget the cry of the humble.**

a. **Sing praises to the LORD**: David exhorted others to do what he had already done in this psalm – to praise the LORD, and to **declare His deeds among the people**.

i. “Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther’s Psalms and Hymns were in all men’s mouths, and in the modern revival under Wesley and Whitfield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety.” (Spurgeon)

ii. David here communicated something known among those who praise God. When they praise God, it is natural for them to draw others into similar praise.

b. **When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble**: David called others to praise God for the same reasons he had praised Him earlier; notably, because God is a partisan on behalf of the oppressed and the humble. God even **avenges** their **blood**.

i. [Numbers 35:33-34](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+35.33-34&t=NKJV) tells us that the blood of unavenged murders pollutes the earth. The blood of Abel spoke to God ([Genesis 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+4.10&t=NKJV)), and the blood of Nabal was seen by God ([2 Kings 9:26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Kings+9.26&t=NKJV)). God has promised to avenge blood and remember the murdered. “The designation of God as ‘making inquisition for blood’ thinks of Him as the Goel, or Avenger. To seek here means to demand back…to demand compensation or satisfaction, and this finally comes to mean to avenge or punish.” (Maclaren)

ii. It reminds us that God will remember and avenge the blood of His persecuted people. “O persecutors, there is a time a-coming, when God will make a strict enquiry after the blood of Hooper, Bradford, Latimer, Taylor, Ridley, etc. There is a time a-coming, wherein God will enquire who silenced and suspended such-and-such ministers, and who stopped the mouths of such-and-such, and who imprisoned, confined, and banished such-and-such, who were once burning and shining lights, and who were willing to spend and be spent that sinners might be saved, and that Christ might be glorified.” (Spurgeon)

#### 3. (13-14) A plea for mercy from the God who remembers.

**Have mercy on me, O LORD!  
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,  
You who lift me up from the gates of death,  
That I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.  
I will rejoice in Your salvation.**

a. **Have mercy on me, O LORD**: David had just considered that God remembered the *cry of the humble*. Now, David wanted God to remember *him* in his season of **trouble** (**consider my trouble from those who hate me**).

i. **Gates of death…Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion**: “The contrast between the gates of death and the gates of the New Jerusalem is very striking; let our songs be excited to the highest and most rapturous pitch by the double consideration of whence we are taken.” (Spurgeon)

b. **That I may tell of all Your praise**: David wanted God to rescue him so that he could give God all the more **praise**, and all the more passionately to **rejoice in** God’s **salvation**.

i. Again, the idea is that David has much more than his own benefit and well-being in mind. Even his deliverance is a way for God to bring more glory to Himself. David did not see his rescue as the final goal; the goal was always God’s greater glory.

ii. **I will rejoice in Your salvation**: “It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian; it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy. If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and a flashing eye, it is the man whose sins are forgiven him, and who is saved with God’s salvation.” (Spurgeon)

#### 4. (15-16) The destiny of the wicked.

**The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;  
In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.  
The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;  
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah**

a. **The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made**: David understood the triumph of God to be so complete that His enemies were ensnared in the same trap they set for others. Even the best plans and efforts of those who oppose God end up serving His purpose.

i. This pattern is demonstrated again and again in the Scriptures.

· Esau and Isaac plot against the purpose of God and end up serving it.

· Joseph’s brothers fight against the plan of God only to further it.

· Haman built a gallows for Mordecai the Jew, only to be executed upon it himself.

· Judas betrayed Jesus and became himself a fulfillment of prophecy.

ii. This, of course, never justifies the evil that men do; though the betrayal of Judas sent Jesus to the cross, he himself was rightly called the *son of perdition* (the one destined for destruction) for his evil work ([John 17:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+17.12&t=NKJV)).

iii. “There is nothing that a wicked man does that is not against his own interest. He is continually doing himself harm, and takes more pains to destroy his soul than the righteous man does to get his saved unto eternal life. This is a weighty truth; and the psalmist adds: *Higgaion; Selah*. Meditate on this; mark it well.” (Clarke)

b. **The LORD is known by the judgment He executes**: The greatness of God is demonstrated by the way He can use the plans and efforts of the ungodly, while also bringing righteous **judgment** upon them.

### C. Appealing to the God who judges in righteousness.

#### 1. (17-18) God will deal with both the wicked and the humble.

**The wicked shall be turned into hell,  
*And* all the nations that forget God.  
For the needy shall not always be forgotten;  
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.**

a. **The wicked shall be turned into hell**: Here, as David approaches the conclusion of the psalm, he considered the *end* of the wicked – ultimate destruction in **hell**.

i. In the patterns of Hebraic poetry, the phrase “**and all the nations that forget God**” can be considered just another way of describing **the wicked** mentioned in the previous line. Yet it is a useful repetition, reminding us of the inherently great sin of *forgetting God*.

ii. What does the sinner forget about God?

· Man forgets the *infinite majesty and glory* of God.

· Man forgets the *mercies* of God.

· Man forgets the *laws* of God.

· Man forgets the *presence* of God.

· Man forgets the *justice* of God.

iii. Why does the sinner forget God?

· Man forgets God because *the thought of God makes him afraid*.

· Man forgets God because *the thought of God doesn’t entertain him enough*.

· Man forgets God because *the thought of God makes it hard to carry on in sin*.

iv. “The forgetters of God are far more numerous than the profane or profligate, and according to the very forceful expression of the Hebrew, the nethermost hell will be the place into which all of them shall be hurled headlong. Forgetfulness seems a small sin, but it brings eternal wrath upon the man who lives and dies in it.” (Spurgeon)

v. **The wicked shall be turned into hell**: “Hebrew, into into hell (twice), that is, into the nethermost hell, the lowest dungeon of hell…. R. Solomon’s note here is, they shall be carried away from hell to judgment, and from judgment they shall be returned to the deepest pit of hell.” (Trapp)

b. **For the needy shall not always be forgotten**: David expresses a beautiful contrast here. The wicked try to **forget God**; yet the **needy** and **poor** (here describing the godly who are oppressed by God’s enemies) are **not…forgotten**.

i. **Shall not always be forgotten** reminds us that from the perception of the **needy** and **poor**, they may for a time feel forgotten. Yet the good God promises that they will not **always** feel this way, and their **expectation** will not forever be disappointed.

ii. There are few more painful things than feeling *forgotten* and feeling *disappointed*. To those in such pain, God makes these wonderful promises; that they **shall not always be forgotten**, and their **expectation** will not perish.

· You shall not always be forgotten at the mercy-seat; so keep praying.

· You shall not always be forgotten in the Word; so keep reading.

· You shall not always be forgotten from the pulpit; so keep hearing.

· You shall not always be forgotten at the Lord’s Table; so keep receiving.

· You shall not always be forgotten in your service; so keep serving.

· You expect to have peace in Jesus; in Him you will have it.

· You expect to triumph over sin; in Him you will triumph.

· You expect to get out of trouble; in Him you will be delivered.

· You expect to grow strong in faith; in Him you will be strengthened.

· You expect to have spiritual joys and experiences; in Him you will have them.

iii. “The needy, and the poor, whose expectation is from the Lord, are never forgotten, though sometimes their deliverance is delayed for the greater confusion of their enemies, the greater manifestation of God’s mercy, and the greater benefit to themselves.” (Clarke)

#### 2. (19-20) An appeal for God to glorify Himself among the nations.

**Arise, O LORD,  
Do not let man prevail;  
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.  
Put them in fear, O LORD,  
*That* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men. Selah**

a. **Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail**: Previously in this psalm, David expressed a firm confidence in God’s judgment of the wicked and His vindication of the righteous. Yet David did not allow this expectation to make him *passive* or *fatalistic* in regard to the outworking of God’s plan. Instead, he boldly prayed, “**Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail**.”

i. “Prayers are the Church’s weapons…whereby she is terrible as an army with banners; she prays down her enemies.” (Trapp)

ii. “The word for *man*, in both verses, is one which tends to emphasize his frailty.” (Kidner)

iii. “All the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom of Solon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. May we ever remember this, lest like those in the text, we should be *put in fear.*” (Spurgeon)

b. **Let the nations be judged in Your sight…that the nations may know themselves to be but men**: David again expressed his confidence in God’s judgment of the wicked. Yet this did not lead David to a hatred of mankind or unhealthy joy in judgment. His real hope was that the display of God’s judgment would *teach* the nations their proper place before God (**to be but men**).

i. This is a place of humility, and as David has already noted in this psalm, the humble are remembered before God ([Psalm 9:12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+9.12&t=NKJV)). This was a prayer for God to *reach* the nations through the display of His judgment.

ii. “Strange, that man, dust in his original, sinful by his fall, and continually reminded of both by every thing in him and about him, should yet stand in need of some sharp affliction, some severe visitation from God, to bring him the knowledge of himself, and make him feel who and what he is.” (Horne)

iii. “So the two parts of the psalm end with the thought that the ‘nations’ may yet come to know the name of God, the one calling upon those who have experienced His deliverance to ‘declare among the peoples His doings,’ the other praying God to teach by chastisement what nations who forget Him have failed to learn from mercies.” (Maclaren)

iv. “What prayer, then, can we pray which is of more vital importance than that the nations may know themselves to be but men? Such knowledge must drive them to dependence upon God, and such dependence is the secret of national strength, and of national prosperity and permanence.” (Morgan)

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# Dilemma and Deliverance

A Sermon (No. 287)  
Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 4th, 1859

REV. C.H. SPURGEON at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens  
at [*https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons06/sermons06.ii.html*](https://ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons06/sermons06.ii.html)

“Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.”—[Psalm 9:10.](https://ccel.org/study/Ps_9:10-9:10)

THERE ARE MANY MEN who are exceedingly well read in heathen mythologies; who can tell you the history of any one of the heathen gods, but who at the same time know very little of the history of Jehovah, and cannot rehearse his mighty acts. In our schools to this day there are books put into the hands of our youth that are by no means fit for them to read—books which contain all kinds of filth, and if not always filth, yet all kinds of fables and vanities, which are simply put into our hands when we are lads, because they happen to be written in Latin and Greek; and, therefore, I suppose it is imagined that we shall all the better recollect the wickedness that is contained in them, by having the trouble of translating them into our own mother tongue. I would that instead of this, all our youth were made acquainted with the history of the Lord our God. Would that we could give them for classics some books which record what he hath done, the victories of his glorious arm, and how he hath put to nought the gods of the heathen and cast them down even into the depths. At any rate, the Christian will always find it to be useful to have at hand some history of what God did in the days of yore. The more you know of God’s attributes, the more you understand of his acts; the more you treasure up of his promises, and the more you fully dive into the depths of his covenant, the more difficult will it become for Satan to tempt you to despondency and despair. Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. Meditate on his law both day and night, and thou shalt be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; thy leaf shall not wither; thou shalt bring forth fruit in thy season, and whatsoever thou doest shall prosper. Ignorance of God is ignorance of bliss; but knowledge of God is a divine armor, by which we are able to ward off all the blows of the enemy. Know thyself, O man, and that will make thee miserable; know thy God, O Christian, and that will make thee rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, this morning, in addressing you, I shall divide my text into three parts. First, I shall note *a certain fiery dart of Satan;* secondly, I shall point out to you *heaven’s divine buckler,* as hinted at in the text—“Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee;” and then, in the third place, I shall notice *man’s precious privilege of seeking God, and so of arming himself against Satan.*

I. First, then, I am to dwell for a little time upon A CERTAIN FIERY DART OF SATAN WHICH IS CONSTANTLY SHOT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

There are many temptations, there are many suggestions and insinuations; and all these are arrows from the bow of the Evil one. But there is one temptation which exceeds all others, there is one suggestion which is more Satanic, more skilfully used in effecting the purposes of Satan than any other. That suggestion is the one referred to in these words of the Psalmist—viz., this, the suggestion to believe that God has forsaken us. If all the other arrows of hell could be put into one quiver, there would not be so much deadly poison in the whole as in this one. When Satan has used up every other weapon, he always betakes himself to this last, most sharp, moat deadly instrument. He goes to the child of God and pours into his ear this dark insinuation, “Thy God has forsaken thee quite; thy Lord will be gracious no more.”

Now, I shall remark with regard to this arrow, that it is one that is very often shot from Satan’s bow. Some of us have been wounded by it scores of times in our life. Whenever we have fallen into any sin, have been overtaken by some sudden wind of temptation, and have staggered and almost fallen, Conscience pricks us and tells us we have done wrong. Our heart, like David’s heart, smites us. We fall upon our knees, and acknowledge our fault and confess our sin. Then it is that Satan lets fly this arrow, which comes whizzing up from hell and enters into the soul, and while we are making the confession, the dark thought crosses our soul, “God has forsaken thee; he will never accept thee again. Thou hast sinned so foully that he will blot thy name out of the covenant; thou hast stumbled so fearfully that thy feet shall never stand upon the rock again—thou hast stumbled to thy fall; thou hast fallen to thy fell destruction.” Have you not known this, Christian? When for a season you have been led to backslide, when you have lost your first love and have become degenerate, when you have put out your hand to touch the unlawful thing through some sudden surprisal—has not this been thrown in your teeth?” Ah, wretch that you are, God will never forgive that sin: you have been so ungrateful, such a hypocrite, such a liar against the Lord your God, that now—now he will cast you away, throw you upon a dunghill like salt that has lost its savor, and as fit for nothing.” Ah, friends, you and I know what this means. And I dare say David did too. He had to feel all the power of this poisoned arrow after his great sin, when he went up to his chamber and wept and bemoaned himself, and there cried out in agony, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” A select opportunity this for shooting this arrow. Just where the sin has been Satan marks, and then he sends a suggestion. Wherever there is a wound of sin, it is wonderful how this arrow will work, and what a burning it will give to our blood till every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, and all our flesh is made to tingle with this evil thought, “I have sinned, and the reprover of man has reproved me to my face and cast me from his presence, and he will be gracious to me no more.” Another season when Satan usually shoots this arrow is the time of great trouble. There is a broad river across your path, and you are bidden to ford it. You go in and you find the water is up to your knees. Anon, as you wade on it becomes breast-high. But you comfort yourself with this thought, “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” Cheered with this you go on; but you sink, and the water becomes deeper still. At last, it is almost gurgling in your throat! it is flowing over your very shoulders. Just then, when in the very deepest part of the stream, Satan appears on the bank, takes out his bow and shoots this fiery arrow.—“Thy God has forsaken thee.”

“Oh,” saith the Christian, “I feared not as long as I heard the voice saying, ‘Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.’ But now,” saith he, “my God hath forsaken me.” And now the Christian begins to sink indeed, and if it be not for the mighty power of God, it will not be Satan’s fault if he doth not drown thee in the midst of the flood. What a malicious devil is this, that must always send us a fresh trouble, and most grievous of all, send it when we are in our very worst distress. He is a coward, indeed; he always hits a man when he is down. When I am up and on my feet I am more than a match for Satan, but when I begin to stumble through great trouble, out comes the dragon from the pit, and begins to roar at me, and to draw his sword, and hurl his fiery darts; for now, says he, “man’s extremity shall be my opportunity; *now* that his heart and flesh fails—*now* will I make a full end of him.” You also know, some of you, what that means. You could bear the trouble well, but you could not bear the dreary thought that God has forsaken you in your trouble. Another season, too, in which Satan shoots this fiery dart is before some great labor. I am often vexed and perplexed with this dark thought when I have to appear before you on the Sabbath day; I frequently come here with that ringing in my ears:—“God will forsake thee; thou shalt fall before the congregation; the word shall not go home with power; thou shalt labor in vain, and spend thy strength for nought.”

Thousands of times have I preached the gospel, yet to this day does that same arrow come flying up, and still does it vex and perplex my heart. If there be anything greater for a Christian to do, than he has been accustomed to do in former times, it is generally then that Satan levels this battle, when there is a deep soil to be ploughed, and the plough it heavy, and the oxen are faint, and the ploughman thinks he shall not accomplish his weary work, then it is that up comes this dark thought—“The Lord hath forsaken thee, and where art thou now?” The like doth he do at another season, namely, times of unanswered prayer. You have been up to God’s throne asking for a blessing; you have been five, six, twelve times, and you have had no answer; you go again; and you are just wrestling with God and the blessing seems as if it must come; but no, it does not come, and you bring your burden away on your back once more. You have been wont to cast all your cares upon God, and come away rejoicing; but now you find that prayer hath no return of blessing; it seems to be a waste of words. Then up comes Satan, just at the moment, and he says, “God hath forsaken you, if you were a child of God, he would answer your prayer; he would not leave you crying so long in the dark as this, if you were one of his beloved children. Why, he hears his people! Look at Elijah how he heard him. Remember Jacob; how he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. Oh,” says Satan, “God has forsaken thee.” Ah, Satan we have heard that aforetime. “Yes, but,” says he, “his mercy is clean gone for ever. The heavens have become like brass, the Shekinah is gone up from between the wings of the cherubim, his house is left empty and void; Ichabod is written on thy closet; thou shalt never have an answer again. Go speak to the winds, spread your griefs to the pitiless sea, for God’s ear is shut, and he will never move his arm to work deliverance for thee.”

Now, am I not justified in saying that this arrow is very often shot. I may not have mentioned all the instances in which it has been shot at you, but I am certain that if you are a child of God, there have been times and seasons when this desperate insinuation has come up from hell—“God hath forgotten thee: he hath cast thee off: thou art left to thyself, and thou shalt perish.” At any rate, if you have never said it, remember it is written in God’s word that Zion saith “My God hath forgotten me;” and call to your recollection that gracious answer “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” The arrow; then, is often shot.

Then let me remark with regard to this arrow, again that it is most grievous. Other troubles only wound the Christian’s’ flesh; they do but pierce with skin deep wounds; but this is a shot that goes right deep into his heart. When Satan is shooting other arrows we can laugh at him, for they rattle against our buckler; but this one finds out the joints of the harness, and it goes right through from one side to the other, till we are compelled to say, “As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach one; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?” This is hitting the target in the very center. This is skillful riflery, indeed, when Satan is able to send this arrow right into the eve of the soul. Other troubles are like surface storms. They toss the ocean into an apparent storm, and there are big waves on the top, but all is still and calm down in the caverns beneath. But this dark thought makes the ocean boil to its very bottom; it stirs the soul up until there is not one place in which there is rest; neither a cavern of the heart, nor a corner of the conscience in which the spirit has peace. This arrow, I say, is one of hell’s masterpieces, there is more craft and skill in it than aught else Satan has ever done. It is the worst of his arrows because it grieves the Spirit exceedingly. And there is another thought I must throw out. Not only is this arrow grievous, but it is very dangerous. For if, my brethren, we believe this accusation against God, it is not long before we begin to sin. Let the Christian know that his God is with him, and temptation will have little power, but when God has forsaken us, as we think that he has, ah! then, when Satan offers us some back door by which to escape from our troubles, how very easily shall we be tempted to adopt his expedients. A merchant who knows that his God is with him, may see trade going from him, and his house verging to bankruptcy, but he will not do a dishonest thing. But let him imagine that God is against him, then Satan will say, “See, merchant, one of God’s children, you have been deceived, he will never help you;” and then, he is tempted to do something which in his conscience he knows to be wrong. “God will not deliver me,” he says; “then I will try to deliver myself.” There is great danger in this. Take heed to yourself then that ye “take unto you the whole armor of God,” and “above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” I will make but one other observation upon this fiery dart; and that is, it bears the full impression of its Satanic maker. None but the devil could be the author of such a thought as this—that God has forsaken his people. Look it in the face, Christian, and see if it has not got the horns of the Evil One stamped on its brow? Does not the cloven foot peep out? Look at it; why, it is the devil’s own child. Why, bethink thee, Christian, this Evil One is making thee doubt thy own Father. He is bidding thee distrust a faithful God. He is calling in question the promise which says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” He is making you accuse God of perjury. As if he could break his oath, and run back from the covenant which he has made with Christ on thy behalf. Why, none but the devil could have the impudence to suggest such a thought as that. Cast it from thee, believer; fling it away to the very depths of the sea; it is unworthy of thee to harbor it for a moment. Thy God forsake thee? Impossible! He is too good. Thy God forsake thee? It is utterly impossible! He is too true. Could he forsake his children, he would have forsaken his integrity; he would have ceased to be God, when he ceased to succor and help his own. Rest thou, then, in that, and ward the fiery dart off; for hellish, indeed, it is, and the name of its maker is stamped upon it legibly.

II. In the second place, let me notice THE DIVINE BUCKLER WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR HIS CHURCH AGAINST THIS FIERY DART. Here it is; it is the fact that God never has forsaken them that fear him, and that, moreover, he never will do so.

Ah, my brethren, if we could but once believe the doctrine that the child of God might fall from grace and perish everlastingly, we might, indeed, shut up our Bible in despair. To what purpose would my preaching be—the preaching of a rickety gospel like that? To what purpose your faith—a faith in a God that cannot and would not carry on to the end? To what use the blood of Christ, if it were shed in vain, and did not bring the blood-bought ones securely home? To what purpose the Spirit, if he were not omnipotent enough to overcome our wandering, to arrest our sins and make us perfect, and present us faultless before the throng of God at last? That doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is, I believe, as thoroughly bound up with the standing or falling of the gospel, as is the article of justification by faith. Give that up and I see no gospel left. I see no beauty in religion that is worthy of my acceptance, or that deserves my admiration. An unchanging God, an everlasting covenant, a sure mercy, these are the things that my soul delights in, and I know your hearts love to feed upon them. But take these away, and what have we? We have a foundation of wood, hay, straw, and stubble. We have nothing solid. We have a fort of earth-works, a mud hovel through which the thief may break and steal away our treasures. Nay, this foundation stands sure—“The Lord knoweth them that are his;” and he doth so know them that he will certainly bring them every one to his right hand at last in glory everlasting.

But to return to our text, and to offer you some few words of comfort which may tend to quench the fiery dart of the wicked one. The psalmist says, “Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” I call up before you now, one by one as witnesses, the saints of God in the olden time. You are in great trouble to-day and Satan suggests that now God has forsaken you. Come hither, Jacob! we read thy testimony. Wast thou a man of trouble? “Ah,” saith he, “few and evil were my days.” Evil, man?—what meanest thou? “I mean that they were full of sorrow, full of perplexity, full of fear and trouble.” And what is thy testimony, Jacob? We have heard that thou didst seek God in prayer. Didst thou not wrestle with the angel at the brook Jabbok, and prevail? Speak, man, and tell these doubting hearts, did God forsake thee? Methinks I see that hoary patriarch lifting up his hands, and he cries, “I trembled to meet my brother, Esau. I stayed at the brook Jabbok, and I said, ‘Lord, give deliverance from him whom I think bloodthirsty.’ I crossed the brook full of fear and trembling, but tell it, O let it be known for the comfort of others in like trouble with me, I met my brother Esau, and he fell upon my neck and kissed me. He would not take the tribute which I offered him. He became my friend and we loved each other. God had turned his heart, and he took no vengeance upon me. But,” continued the patriarch, “I was always a doubting man, I was always a careful man; I had so much cunning and craft about me that I could not trust anything in the hands of my Covenant God, and this always brought me into care and trouble. but,” says he, “I bear my witness that I never had need to have troubled myself at all; if I had but left it all in the hand of God, all would have been well. I remember,” saith he, “and I tell it to you now, when my son Joseph was sold into Egypt what sorrow I had in my heart, for I said, ‘My grey hairs shall be brought with sorrow to the grave, for Joseph my son is, without a doubt, rent in pieces.’ And then it happened on a day that Simeon was taken away from me; and there came a message out of Egypt that Benjamin must go down. And I remember well what I said ‘Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now they will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.’ But they were not against me,” says the old man, “they were for me, every one of them. Joseph, that I said was not, *was;* he was sitting upon the throne; he had prepared for me a habitation in Egypt. As for Simeon, he was a hostage there; and that was not against me, for perhaps I should scarce have sent my sons down at all if it had not been for the hope that they would bring Simeon back. And now,” says Jacob, “I retract every word I have said against the Lord my God, and I stand before you to bear my testimony that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. My shoes were iron and brass, and as my days so was my strength.”

I hear a mourner say, “Mine is not a case of trouble and sorrow; mine is a case of duty. I have a duty to perform that is too heavy for me, and I am afraid I shall never accomplish it.” Here comes another of the ancients to bear his witness. It is Moses; let him speak. “I thought,” said he, “when God called me from keeping the flocks of my father in the desert by the mount of Horeb, I thought I never could be strong enough for the office to which I had been ordained. I said unto my Lord, who am I, that I should go unto Pharoah? And I said unto him again, Lord, thou knowest I am not eloquent; the children of Israel will not believe me, for I shall not have skill enough in oratory to persuade them to follow my words. But the Lord said, Certainly I will be with thee. And lo,” says Moses, “as my days so was my strength. I had strength enough to stand before Pharoah, strength enough to shake the whole land of Egypt, and strength enough to divide the Red Sea and drown all Pharoah’s hosts. I had strength enough to endure with an evil generation forty years in the wilderness, strength enough to take their idol god and grind it in pieces, and make them drink the water upon which I had strewn the atoms. I had strength enough to lead them on from day to day, to command the rock and it gushed with water, to speak to the heavens and they sent down the manna. And when I went up at last to my grave, and looked from the top of Nebo, I, who had once been fearful, saw with transport the land to which the Lord’s people had been brought, and my soul was taken away with a kiss, and I departed in peace.” Hear that, then, O laboring one; the God that helped Moses will help thee. Moses sought God, and God did not forsake him; nor will he forsake thee.

But saith another, “I am exposed to slander, men speak evil of me; no lie is too bad for them to utter against me.” Ah, my friend, permit me to refer you to another ancient saint; it is the saint who wrote this psalm—David. Let him stand up and speak. “Ah!” saith he “from the first day when I went forth to fight Goliath even to the end of my life I was the subject of shame and slander. Doeg the Edomite, Saul, and multitudes of men, the men of Belial, like Shimei, all accused me. I was the song of the drunkard; I was the harlot’s jest. Nothing was too bad for David. All mine enemies went round about the city like dogs, that bay all night and rest not even at morning.” And what didst thou do, David? “Oh,” said he, “I said, ‘My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.’” And didst thou prove that God was thy deliverer? “Ah, yes—yes,” saith he, “I have pursued my enemies, and I have overtaken them.’ ‘Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.’” And so shall you find it, my hearers, God has not forsaken you, even though you be slandered. Remember it is the lot of God’s greatest servants to bear the worst character amongst worldlings. Whose character is safe in these days? What man among us may not be accused of any indecency? Who among us can hope to stand immaculate when liars are so rife, and charges are so abundant? Be content and bear the slander. Remember, the higher the tower the longer will be the shadow; and often, the higher a man’s character the fouler will be the slander that comes out against him. But remember, “no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

If ye need any other witnesses I could bring them. Let Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego come forth. Ye Hebrew children, ye stood in the midst of coals when the furnace was white with heat; did God forsake you? “No,” they say, “our hair was not singed, nor had the smell of fire passed on our garments.” Speak, O Daniel! Thou didst stand a night in the midst of the furious lions, who had been starved for days that they might devour thee in their hunger; what sayest thou? “My God,” saith he, “hath sent his angel to shut the lions’ mouths; my God, whom I serve, hath not forsaken me.” But time would fail me if I should tell you of those who have “shut the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, obtained promises, wrought victories, put to flight the armies of aliens; “yet we might enlarge for a moment upon the history of great martyrs. Has God left one of them? They have suffered at the stake; their limbs have been stretched on the rack; every nerve has been strained; every bone has been dislocated. They have had their eyes plucked out; they have had their flesh rent away piecemeal to the bone with hot pincers, they have been dragged at the heels of horses, burnt on gridirons, hung up before slow fires. They have seen their infants cut in pieces before their eyes, their wives and daughters ravished, their houses burned, their country laid desolate. But has God forsaken them? Has the world triumphed? Has God left his children? “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Another question is suggested, however, for your comfort, Christian; I have brought many witnesses to prove that Christ does not forsake his children; let me ask you to step into the witness box. You say that God has forsaken you—I will put a question or two to you. When your wife lay sick, and there were three little ones in the house and she approached to death, and you cried in agony to God and said, “God, thou hast forsaken me. My business fails me, and now my wife is to be taken from me! what shall I do with these little ones?” Answer this question; did God forsake you then? “Nay,” you say, “my wife still lives, she was restored to me.” But when one of your children lay a-dying and the others were seized with fever, you then said, “My wife again is sick; what shall I do with this house of sickness? Now, God has forsaken me. I shall never bear this trial.” Did you bear it? “Oh, yes,” say you, “I passed through it and I can say, ‘Blessed be the name of God, the affliction was sanctified to me.’” Do you recollect the heavy loss you sustained in business? Not one but many; loss came after loss; every speculation in which you had been engaged broke down under you. You had many bills coming in, and you said. “Now, I shall not be able to meet them; and as a Christian man you shuddered to think of bankruptcy. You even went up with your wife into your chamber—and you two went on your knees and poured out your case before God, and asked him to help you. Did God leave you? “No,” say you, “as by a miracle I was delivered I cannot tell how it was, but I came out of it clean.” And yet again, another question to another one of you. Do you remember when you were in sin, before you had received pardon, your guilt was heavy upon you, and you sought God and cried to him. Did God deny you? “No,” you say, “blessed be his name, I can remember the happy day when he said ‘your sins which are many are all forgiven.’” Well, you have often sinned since then. But let me ask you, when you have made confession of sin, have you not been restored? has he not lifted up upon you once more the light of his countenance? “Well,” you say, “I must say he has.” Then, I ask you in the name of everything that is true and holy, nay, in the name of everything that is reasonable, how dare you say that God has forsaken you now? Retract the word! Slay the thought! It cannot, must not be—

“Each sweet Ebenezer you have in review,

Confirms his good pleasure to help you quite through.”

He would not have done this much for you, if he meant to leave you. Thus, it cannot be, that he who has been with you in six troubles will leave you in the seventh. He has not brought you through so many fires to let you be burned at last. Nay, take heart—

“His grace shall to the end

Stronger and brighter shine,

Not present things, nor things to come,

Shall quench the spark divine ”

within thy heart; much less quench the fire even which still burns in his infinite breast. God hath not forsaken thee as yet.

Still further to drive the thought away, I will very rapidly run through a few precious things. Were you not cold on your way hither this morning. Did you not see the snow upon the ground, and do you dare to doubt God? He hath said, “While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat shall never cease;” and he keeps his word. And yet you think, though he keeps that word he will forget the word that he has spoken concerning you. You come here in trouble this morning. Do you not see that God is true? that your very trouble is a proof that he has not forsaken you? If you never had any trouble, then God would have broken his promise, for did not Jesus Christ leave you it as a legacy? “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” There, you have got it. That proves that God is true. *Now,* you have a part of the legacy, you shall have the rest:—“In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” So that the very weather without, and your troubles within, ought to forbid your doubting the faithfulness of your God. But look here. Has not God made you a promise, saying, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?” Would you like to be called a promise-breaker? Shall I point my finger at you, and say, “There’s a man whose word is not to be relied on?” Will you point that same finger to God, and say, “His word is not to be taken, he is not to be trusted?” What! do you think your God is dishonorable? that he will give a promise and break it? not keep it? forget it? fail to remember it? What! God, the God of glory, prove dishonorable? It must not, cannot be. Recollect, again, he has given you his oath. Can you think that he will break that? Because he could swear by no greater he sware by himself. Shall God be perjured? You would not think that of your meanest fellow-creature; will you think that of your greatest and best friend? Again, would you leave your child? would you forsake it utterly? You might hide your face from it for awhile to do it good, because it had been disobedient. but will you chasten your child always? never kiss it, never caress it, never call it your loved one? It is not in a father’s heart to be always angry with his child. And will God forsake you? Will he cast you out into this wide, desolate world and let you die and become the prey of his great enemy? Oh, think not so hardly of your Father. If any man should come to me, and tell me that my father had said such-and-such things about me unkind and disrespectful, I would show him the door, and say, “Get thee gone! my father would never do that: he loves me too much to do that.” And when the devil comes and says, “Your Father has forgotten you,” tell him to begone—you know too much of your Father ever to believe that. Say to him, “Get thee gone! it cannot be; get thee gone, Satan! Tell it to thy own companions, but tell it not to the heir of heaven.” Then again, Christian, Thou believest that God has loved thee from before the foundation of the world; and yet after having loved you so long he has left off loving you now. Strange thing! Love without a beginning, yet such love to have an end. Singular thing! Eternal at one end and temporal at the other. Strange supposition! Put it away from thee. Besides, again, can Christ forget thee! Art thou not a member of his body, of his flesh and his bones? Has the Head forgotten a finger? Has he, who did hang upon the tree and who wrote thy name in wounds upon his hand and on his side, has he forgotten? What! Jesus thy own brother, thy husband, thy head, thy all, what! he forget? he forsake? Down blaspheming thought! Back to the hell from which thou dost spring! Down! down! down! My soul lifts up her head triumphantly, and cries, “Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee,” nor wilt thou do so, world without end.

III. I now come to the third and last point, and on this I shall dwell very briefly—MAN’S PRECIOUS PRIVILEGE TO SEEK GOD IN HIS DAY OF TROUBLE.

To what use, to what purpose is the buckler if we wear it not? Of what service the shield if it be permitted to rust in the house? We must take hold upon the promise of a faithful God; we must seize the comfort which he offers; but how is it to be done? Why, in prayer. Seek ye the Lord ye tried and troubled ones, and ye shall soon find your troubles stayed, your trials sweetly alleviated. We go rambling round, and round, and round, to find peace. Would that we could stay at home in our closets with our God; we should find peace much better there. We go to our neighbors, we call our friends, we tell them our woes and ask their sympathy

“Were half the breath that’s vainly spent,

To heaven in supplication sent,

Our cheerful song would oftener be,

Hear what the Lord hath done for me.”

Go Christian brother in your troubles and seek God. It is not possible that you can perish praying. If you could perish singing, you could not perish praying on your knees. Think ye that while you can plead a Father’s love, and cry with the Spirit of adoption to him, that you can be forsaken? If you forsake the throne, then may you indeed have a fear that you are forsaken. But when the Spirit draws you to the mercy-seat, such a fear must vanish, for if thou art at the mercy-seat, God is there too. God loves the mercy-seat better than thou dost. He dwelleth between the cherubim; thou only goest there sometimes. But that is his abiding-place, his mercy-seat, where he always sits. Go thou, then, I tell thee, and thou canst not be destroyed; thy ruin is impossible, whilst thou dost cry, “Let us pray!”

And have I here this morning some that are oppressed with guilt? Dear hearer, however great your sins may have been, if thou dost seek God, thou canst not perish, for “thou Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” Methinks, I hear some one say, “Oh, that just suits me. I fear I have no faith; I am afraid I don’t repent as I ought. But I know I seek Christ; I am sure I am seeking him.” Ah! so then this promise is thine. Take it home with thee. Suck it; get at its juice. Here, indeed, is a cluster full of new wine for thee. Take it home with thee:—“Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” Seek, and ye shall find, knock, and the door shall surely be opened to you.

May God now grant his blessing, for Jesu’s sake. Amen.

1. Milne, B. A. (1996). [Righteousness](https://ref.ly/logosres/nbd?ref=biblio.at%3dRighteousness%7cau%3dMilne%2c%2520B.%2520A.%7ced%3dWood%2c%2520D.%2520R.%2520W.%3bMarshall%2c%2520I.%2520H.%3bMillard%2c%2520A.%2520R.%3bPacker%2c%2520J.%2520I.%3bWiseman%2c%2520D.%2520J.). In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., pp. 1020–1021). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)