***Luther’s Favorite Psalm***

**Meeting God in the Psalms: Psalm 118 October 31, 2021**

***Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his love endures forever . . . .  
The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,  
the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in his eyes.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*Psalm 118:1, 22-24**

**Reading Psalm 118**

A. Call to Communal Thanksgiving (vv. 1–4)

B. Thanksgiving in our deliverance (vv. 5–21)  
  
 (1) from our distress (vv. 5–9)  
  
 (2) from our danger (vv. 10–16)  
  
 (3) even from death (vv. 17–21)

A′. Thanksgiving Liturgy (vv. 22–29)

1. Psalm 118 is a liturgical prayer that Jesus would have known (see John 26:30)

2. Psalm 118 is bookended with thanksgiving!

3. Jesus (and the rest of the NT authors!) identified with Psalm 118

-- Hebrews 13:6 uses this psalm as part of the doxology

-- Jesus identifies with the “capstone” image (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17  
 with commentary in 1 Peter 2:4-7; Acts 4:11 and Ephesians 2:20

-- the crowds sing this psalm at the Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10;  
 Luke 13:35 and 19:38; John 12:13

**Why this is Luther’s favorite**

*22 The stone the builders rejected*

*has become the capstone;*

*23 the Lord has done this,*

*and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

*24 This is the day the Lord has made;*

*let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Psalm 118

1. Luther knew how to give thanks in every circumstance

3 *We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

2 Thessalonians 1

2. Luther knew the value of the “marvelous” works of God when he preached

*9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

Romans 5 (see Psalm 118:15-18)

3. Luther knew how to find the Jesus story in the psalms and from Coburg Castle

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

Romans 8:1-4

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.

Spurgeon’s “The Snare of the Fowler” sermon on this text is at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0124.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0124.htm)

Enduring Word has a good intro to Psalm 118 at [*https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-118/*](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-118/)

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/)

Don’t have too much fun with the Luther Insult Generator at [*https://ergofabulous.org/luther/?*](https://ergofabulous.org/luther/?)

You can read several of Luther’s sermons at [*https://ccel.org/ccel/luther/sermons/sermons.viii.i.html*](https://ccel.org/ccel/luther/sermons/sermons.viii.i.html)

From the Lutheran Hour, this is a wonderful sermon on Luther and Psalm 118: [*https://www.lutheranhour.org/sermon.asp?articleid=3850*](https://www.lutheranhour.org/sermon.asp?articleid=3850)

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 118 (NIV)**

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his love endures forever.

2 Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

3 Let the house of Aaron say:

“His love endures forever.”

4 Let those who fear the Lord say:

“His love endures forever.”

5 In my anguish I cried to the Lord,

and he answered by setting me free.

6 The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

7 The Lord is with me; he is my helper.

I will look in triumph on my enemies.

8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to trust in man.

9 It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to trust in princes.

10 All the nations surrounded me,

but in the name of the Lord I cut them off.

11 They surrounded me on every side,

but in the name of the Lord I cut them off.

12 They swarmed around me like bees,

but they died out as quickly as burning thorns;

in the name of the Lord I cut them off.

13 I was pushed back and about to fall,

but the Lord helped me.

14 The Lord is my strength and my song;

he has become my salvation.

15 Shouts of joy and victory

resound in the tents of the righteous:

“The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!

16 The Lord’s right hand is lifted high;

the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!”

17 I will not die but live,

and will proclaim what the Lord has done.

18 The Lord has chastened me severely,

but he has not given me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness;

I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord

through which the righteous may enter.

21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me;

you have become my salvation.

22 The stone the builders rejected

has become the capstone;

23 the Lord has done this,

and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 O Lord, save us;

O Lord, grant us success.

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

From the house of the Lord we bless you.

27 The Lord is God,

and he has made his light shine upon us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession

up to the horns of the altar.

28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks;

you are my God, and I will exalt you.

29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his love endures forever.

# [Psalm 118](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+118&t=NKJV) – The Chief Cornerstone from [*https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-118/*](https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/psalm-118/)

[*Psalm 118*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+118&t=NKJV) *does not name an author in its title, but there is reason to believe it was King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel.* [*Ezra 3:10-11*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezra+3.10-11&t=NKJV) *suggests that* [*Psalm 118*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+118&t=NKJV) *was sung at the founding of the second temple, and when they sang it, they attributed it to David (“according to the ordinance of David king of Israel,”* [*Ezra 3:10*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ezra+3.10&t=NKJV)*).*

*“Most probably David was the author of this psalm…. It partakes of David’s spirit, and everywhere shows the hand of a master. The style is grand and noble; the subject, majestic.” (Adam Clarke)*

*Though this was likely David’s psalm, it was also Jesus’ psalm. “This is pre-eminently the triumph song of the Christ, He the ideal Servant, He the perfect Priest, He the Leader of the people. How much all these words meant to Him as He sang them on that night in the upper room.” (G. Campbell Morgan)*

*Though this was likely David’s psalm, it was also Luther’s psalm.* “*This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own. When emperors and kings, the wise and the learned, and even saints could not aid me, this psalm proved a friend and helped me out of many great troubles. As a result, it is dearer to me than all the wealth, honor, and power of the pope, the Turk, and the emperor. I would be most unwilling to trade this psalm for all of it.” (Martin Luther, cited by James Montgomery Boice)*

# Reading the Psalms with Luther

by [Stephen J. Nichols](https://tabletalkmagazine.com/contributor/stephen-nichols/) at [*https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/reading-the-psalms-with-luther/*](https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/reading-the-psalms-with-luther/)

In 1530, Martin Luther spent six months at the Castle Coburg. He set out from Wittenberg in late March, accompanied by a small band of colleagues and two of his sons. He spent a few weeks at Torgau, where he was joined by others. At Torgau, Luther hammered out what would come to be known as the Augsburg Confession of Faith. From Torgau, this group of theologians and princes and attendants started the journey to Augsburg. By mid-April the group made it to the Castle Coburg, and that’s as far as Luther could go.

Luther was not promised safe passage to Augsburg. From the time of the Diet at Worms, Luther was an outlaw. Augsburg was outside of Saxony, Germany.

The Castle Coburg is a charming place, one of Germany’s largest castles. It looks rather like a place in a fairy tale. But, for Luther, being there for six months was anything but charming. He would have much preferred Augsburg. He wanted to be there. He felt like he absolutely needed to be there.

This enterprise of the Reformation in Germany was only a dozen years old. It was vulnerable and frail. There were enemies all around. Luther intended to travel to Augsburg, but he was an outlaw, and not being granted safe passage and not having that full protection meant that Luther could not to go. Instead he would spend the next six months in Castle Coburg.

Luther was prone to anxiety even in good times. These six months could have been unbearable, and they were likely punctuated with moments of anxiety. Rather than fret away this time at Coburg, Luther turned to writing. Luther wrote somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty texts of varying lengths during this six-month stay at the Castle Coburg. One of these texts was a treatise on [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/). He would come to call this Psalm his “beloved Psalm.” Luther on [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/) teaches us how to read the Psalms.

Before going further with [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/) in particular, it is helpful to note Luther on the Psalms in general. Luther loved the Psalms, first lecturing on them in 1513–1516. His immersion in the Psalms certainly impacted the events of 1517. After the Ninety-Five Theses, Luther returned to the Psalms again and again. He started a practice of reading the Psalms through the day at seven designated times. This enabled him to read through the Psalter in two weeks. He kept disciplined at that practice throughout most of his life. He read the Psalms hundreds of times. He studied and lectured on the Psalms. He translated the Psalms into German. It is fair to say that Luther lived in the Psalms. And his most dear, most beloved of these 150 hymns is [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/).

##### Reading the Psalms to See Ourselves

[Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/) has bookends. The beginning and the ending are the same: “Oh, give thanks. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his steadfast love endures forever” (118:1, 29). When the biblical authors use this literary device, they not only emphasize the beginning and the end, sometimes they also point to the middle.

The psalmist expresses absolute despair in the middle of this Psalm. The psalmist likens the enemies surrounding him to a swarm of bees (118:11). Then the psalmist says, “I was pushed hard so that I was falling” (118:13a).

Luther felt like this. I don’t know how many times in his life Luther felt like the world was closing in on him. Before he saw the beauty of the gospel, he thought God was out to get him, that God had made it his agenda to squash him like a bug. He felt Satan’s attack so acutely that Luther wondered sometimes if he could see the devil himself materialize before his very eyes. Luther had enemies. Many of his friends turned on him. He must have felt like he was surrounded by a swarm of bees.

This is the first thing we learn from Luther on to how to read the Psalms. We read the Psalms personally. The experiences recounted in the Psalms are not only somebody else’s experiences. These aren’t only Israel’s experiences. These are our experiences. Every high and every low of the human spectrum of emotions is in the Psalms. The psalmists rival any of the great blues men and women. They could sing in the minor key. Utter despair is found in the Psalms. The Psalms also resound in a major key. Pure joy is in the Psalms. And everything in between despair and joy can be found, too. Success and victory are in the Psalms. Defeat and desolation are in the Psalms. The vagaries of human experience and of human emotion is in the Psalms. And Luther wants us to find ourselves there.

Luther latched on to this in [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/). He especially latched on to [Psalm 118:17](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A17/), “I shall not die, but I shall live.” Now, on the one hand, the psalmist does eventually die. The psalmist is not saying, “I’ll never die. I’m invincible.” Instead, the psalmist has come to the realization that he is squarely and fully in God’s hand, and squarely and fully hedged in by the protection of Almighty God. The psalmist can say that nothing will befall me that my heavenly Father has not ordained and has not orchestrated and brought to pass. And in that, the psalmist has confidence.

To utter, “I shall not die,” is not human bravado. This is trust in God. This is exactly what Luther needed at Coburg while he was fretting away and wondering if this whole thing was about to fall apart, and what would come of his beloved church and his beloved Germany. Luther, prone to anxiety, could say, “I shall not die.”

Luther always thought he was going to die. He talked about his death frequently and took every illness as if it were going to be the cause of his last breath. His asceticism in the monastery caught up with him as he grew older. Anybody who lived into their 40s and 50s in this moment in history would have had intestinal parasites, failing eyesight, gout, and arthritis. Luther was beset by these things. What’s more, he carried the burden of reforming the church. At times, he was under siege. Additionally, he was prone to exaggeration. Luther needed to hear the words of [Psalm 118:17](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A17/).

It is fair to say that Luther lived in the Psalms. And his most dear, most beloved of these 150 hymns is [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/).

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Luther is, ultimately, a preacher. He started in 1513 at the Marienkirche, Mary’s Church in Wittenberg. He preached right up until his death in 1546. That’s why Luther also resonated with how [Psalm 118:17](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A17/) finishes, “and [I shall] recount the deeds of the Lord.” That is what a preacher does. He stands up and recounts the deeds of the Lord.

Now we can see why Luther took [Psalm 118:17](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A17/) so personally. He knew he was firmly in God’s hand, that every single tick of the clock is controlled by God in His in his sovereign goodness. Luther would fill every moment of his life recounting the deeds of the Lord.

Luther would say to us, when you read the Psalms, read them for yourself. They are your psalms.

##### Reading the Psalms to See Christ

The second way we read the Psalms is to see Christ in the Psalms. God is there in the Psalms. He is righteous and holy, full of power and might. He is ready to crush you. His justice demands it. His righteousness demands it. And his power enables him to do it. God is ready to crush you with the power of his right arm, but for Christ. And as Luther sees God in the Psalms, the God shrouded in glory and mystery, the God who dwells in light inaccessible, the God of pure holiness and justice and righteousness, Luther sees Christ.

Luther speaks of God as knowable and unknowable at the same time. God reveals himself in nature and in His Word. Ultimately, God revealed Himself in the incarnation. The Word become flesh is the manifestation of the glory of God. Yet, God remains hidden, shrouded in glory, beyond our comprehension. Theologians sometimes use two Latin phrases to express this: Deus Absconditus, the Hidden God, and Deus Revelatus, the Revealed God. From his first lectures on the Psalms, Luther was seeing this construct in the Psalms. Sometimes God hides his face ([Psalm 13:1, 88:15](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%2013%3A1%2C%2088%3A15/)). On the cross, Christ quotes [Psalm 22:1](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%2022%3A1/), “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” At one point the Psalmist speaks of God as surrounded by clouds and thick darkness ([Psalm 97:2](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%2097%3A2/)). God is transcendent, beyond our reach, beyond our sight. The Psalms speak of God as the Deus Absconditus. The Psalms also speak of the Deus Revelatus.

As Luther read the Psalms, the messianic texts came into clear focus. In these texts, Luther saw the Revealed God, the One who is full of grace and truth, who would come to make God known ([John 1:14–18](https://www.esv.org/John%201%3A14%E2%80%9318/)). As we move from verses 19 to 26 of [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/), we enter into one of the most messianic texts of the Old Testament.

[Psalm 118:19–16](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A19%E2%80%9316/) begins with a petition, “Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord. The righteous shall enter through it” (118:19-20). Therein lies the problem. We are not righteous. How do we enter through a righteous gate into the presence of a righteous God? Luther is going to stop right there. He can’t go any further. He can’t enter these righteous gates.

Luther had a love-hate relationship with this word, righteousness, and with this concept of the righteousness of God. At one point, Luther exclaimed, “I hated the righteous God.”

But then we read 118:21, “I thank you that you have answered me, and you have become my salvation.” Where does this salvation come from? The answer is verse 22, which should sound familiar to you from the New Testament: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” This verse gets quoted five times in the New Testament, making it one of the most quoted Old Testament texts. We must see Christ in the Psalms, because, otherwise, God will crush us—but for this stone, but for this Christ.

We tend to read verses 23 and 24 out of context. We apply them to great moments or to every day. Luther would do the same, but he also wants us to see a specific context in view in these verses. Verse 23 declares, “This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes.” Again, we can apply that to any number of experiences. Luther wants us to see that this is Good Friday. This is the cross. This is the resurrection. This is God’s work of redemption through Christ.

Consider verse 24, “This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” We use this verse in speaking of every day as the day God has made. And that’s likely a good interpretation. Again, Luther would want us to see something specific here, however. It’s the day of salvation. The day in which God provided a way for us to go through a righteous gate, and into the arms of a righteous God. This is the day that the Lord has made. We wept because all we had was the strong right arm of God to crush us, but now we rejoice because we have the strong right arm to scoop us up like a little lamb and hold us to himself. This day of our salvation is the day that God has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Luther can’t read verses 23 and 24 without thinking of the cross.

Then we come to the familiar words of verse 26, which appear again on Palm Sunday in Jerusalem, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” In [Psalm 118:19-26](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118%3A19-26/), we see Christ.

##### Reading the Psalms to See God

Once we see ourselves in the Psalms, we very quickly need to see Christ. And once we see Christ, we then see God in His Trinitarian splendor and majesty. So, we come to the declaration in verse 27, “The Lord is God.” Here the Psalmist points us to the God-ness of God. This redundant expression, “The Lord is God,” is a way of stressing God in His infinite perfections. The psalmist will use the expressions, glory, holy, and majesty to describe this God Who is above all and beside Whom there is no other. The ancient philosophers spoke of God as pure act, pure being. Or as that wonderful Latin expression has it, ens perfectissimus.

We don’t pile on superlatives in English. We don’t say the “mostest,” and we don’t say the “bestest,” and we would never say the “perfectest.” But Latin does. Ens perfectissimus is a piling on of superlatives. Ens means being. Perfectissimus is the superlative form of the superlative word, perfect. The most “perfectest” being would be bad grammar, but a good translation. This is Who we are talking about when we are talking about God.

This God has “made His light to shine upon us” (118:27). Prepositions are important. It’s not against us, it’s not away from us, it’s upon us. Is there anything more beautiful than that? That’s what we see in the Psalms. We see God in the splendor of his majesty, the eternality of his being, the infinitude of his perfections, shining his face upon us. His face is not hidden; He has not forgotten us, nor forsaken us.

Now, this is only possible because of a sacrifice. God stayed the hand of Abraham as Isaac was bound, but God did not stay the hand as His own beloved Son was bound and put on the altar, given for us. Christ is our festal sacrifice, bound with cords and put upon the horn of the altar (118:27b). That’s how God can cause His face to shine upon us. There is no skirting of justice here. There is no sweeping of our sins under some cosmic rug so that we can somehow sneak past those righteous gates. God poured out His wrath on His Son in our place. The Son was crushed. We stand clothed in His righteousness. That is how God causes His light to shine upon us.

All of this brings the psalmist to a declare, “You are my God.” This is the God we see in the Psalms. So [Psalm 118](https://www.esv.org/Psalm%20118/) ends exactly as it begins by turning our eyes to behold our God:

“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever.”

And this is the God Luther wants us to see in the Psalms.

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## Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave

Spurgeon at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/gratitude-for-deliverance-from-the-grave/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/gratitude-for-deliverance-from-the-grave/%23flipbook/)

##### “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” — Psalm cxviii. 17, 18.

How very differently we view things at different times and in differing states of mind! Faith takes a bright and cheerful view of matters, and speaks very confidently, “I shall not die, but live.” When we are slack as to our trust in God, and give way to misgivings and doubts and fears, wo sing in the minor key, and say, “I shall die. I shall never live through this trouble. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; and that day is hastening on. Hope is failing me. Bad times are at the door. I shall not live through the crisis.” Thus our tongues show the condition of the inner man. We talk according to our frames and feelings, and would make others think that things are as we see them with our jaundiced eyes. Is it not a pity that we give a tongue to our unbelief? Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! Dog did I call him? He is a wolf; or shall I call him hound of hell? His voice is as that of Apollyon: it is full of blasphemy against God. Unbelieving utterances will do no good to yourself, and will do harm to those who listen to your babblings. It would be wise to say, “If I should speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” Let us be dumb with silence when wo cannot speak to the glory of God. But, oh, it is a blessed thing, when faith is in our spirit reigning and powerful, to let it have ample opportunity to proclaim the honours of his name! To give his heart a tongue, is wise in man when his heart itself is wise. The more talk we get from the mouth of faith, the better: her lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh. A silent faith, if there be such a thing, robs others of benedictions; and at the same time it does worse, for it robs God of his glory. When we have a joyous faith in full operation, let us be communicative, and let us openly and boldly say, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” I would follow my own advice, and crave a patient hearing of you.

     You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death— Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake; Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. In this full assurance he went bravely to meet his enemies at the Diet of Worms, and, indeed, went courageously wherever duty called him. He felt that God had raised him up to declare the glorious doctrine of justification by faith, and all the other truths of what he believed to be the gospel of God; and therefore no faggots could burn him, and no sword could kill him till that work was done. Thus he bravely wrote out his belief, and set it where many eyes would see it, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” It was no idle boast; but a calm and true conclusion from his faith in God, and fellowship with him. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the like brave thoughts and speeches! We cannot show our courage unless we have difficulties and troubles. A man cannot become a veteran soldier if he never goes to battle. No man can get his sea legs if he lives always on land. Rejoice, therefore, in your tribulations, because they give you opportunities of exhibiting a believing confidence, and thereby glorifying the name of the Most High. But take heed that you have faith, true faith in God; and do not become the puppet of impressions, much less the slave of the judgments of others. To have David’s faith, you must be as David. No man may take up with a confidence of his own making: it must be a real work of the Spirit, and growth of grace within, grasping with living tendrils the promise of the living God.

     I will read the passage from the psalm over again, and we will then consider it by God’s help. “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.”

     First, here is the believer’s view of his afflictions. “The Lord hath chastened me sore.” Secondly, here is the believer’s comfort under those afflictions. “He hath not given me over unto death. I shall not die, but live.” And, thirdly, here is the believer’s conduct after his afflictions, and after his deliverance from them— “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

     I. At the outset, here is THE BELIEVER’S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS. “The Lord hath chastened me sore.”

     On the surface of the words we see the good man’s clear observation that his afflictions came from God. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, “Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.” There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes; but that enemy’s assaults were being overruled by the Lord, and were made to work for his good; so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, “The Lord hath chastened me sore. My enemy struck at me that he might make me fall; but in very truth my gracious God was using him to chasten me that I might not fall. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause wrought my education and establishment.”

     It is well to have grace enough to see that tribulation comes from God: he fills the bitter cup as well as the sweet goblet. Troubles do not spring out of the dust, neither doth affliction grow up from the ground, like hemlock from the furrows of the field; but the Lord himself kindles the fiery furnace, and sits as a refiner at the door. Let us not dwell too much upon the part played by the devil, as though he were a power co-ordinate with God. He is a fallen creature, and his very existence depends upon the will and permission of the Most High. His power is borrowed, and can only be used as the infinite omnipotence of God permits. His wickedness is his own, but his existence is not self-derived. Blame the devil, and blame all his servants as much as you will; but still believe in the mysterious but consoling truth that, in the truest sense, the Lord sends trials upon his saints. “Explain that statement,” say you. Oh, no; I am not called upon to explain it, but to believe it. A great many things, when they are said to be explained by modern thinkers, are merely explained away, and I have not yet begun to learn that wretched art. Remember how Peter told the Jews that he, whom – God by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge decreed to die, even his son Jesus Christ, was nevertheless taken by them with wicked hands, when they had crucified and slain him. The death of Christ was pre-determined in the counsel of God, and yet it was none the less an atrocious crime on the part of ungodly men. The omnipotence and providence of God are to be believed; but man’s responsibility is not therefore to be questioned. Our afflictions may come distinctly from man, as the result of persecution or malice; and yet they may come with even greater certainty from the Lord, and may be the needful outcome of his special love to us.

     For this reason we may wisely moderate our anger against second causes. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick; if he were more intelligent, he would snap at the person using the stick; and, if that intelligence were governed by a spirit of obedience, he would yield to the blow, and learn a lesson from it. Thus, when Shimei reviled David, and Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, said unto the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head;” David meekly replied, “So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” A sight of God’s hand in a trial is the end of rebellion against it in the case of every good man. He says, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” We may lie at his feet, and cry, “Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;” but, if the reason does not appear, we must bow in reverent submission, and say with one of old, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.” Job saw the Lord in his many tribulations, and therefore praised him, saying, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Surely there is nothing better for a man of God than to perceive that his smarts and sorrows come from his Father’s hand, for then he will say, “The will of the Lord be done.” This is the great point in the believer’s view of his afflictions: “He maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

     Next, the believer perceives that his trials come as a chastening. “The Lord hath chastened me sore.” When a child is chastised, two things are clear: first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him, so that he needs to be corrected or instructed; and, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit, and acts in loving wisdom towards him. This is certainly true if his father is an eminently kind and yet prudent parent. Children do not think that there can be any need for chastening them; but when years have matured their judgment, they will know better. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous;” if it did seem joyous, it would not be chastening. The “need be” is not only that we have manifold trials, but that we be in heaviness through them. In the smart of the sorrow lies the blessing of the chastisement. God chastens us in the purest love, because he sees that there is an absolute necessity for it: “for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” Our fathers, according to the flesh, too often corrected us according to their own pleasure, and yet we gave them reverence; but the Father of our spirits corrects us only of necessity— a necessity to which he is too wise to close his eye. Shall we not, therefore, pay greater reverence to him, and bow before him, and live? When Hezekiah was recovered of his sickness, he wrote, “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” I find not that men live by carnal pleasure, nor that the life of the spirit is ever found in the wine-vat or in the oil-press; but I do find that life and health often come to saints through briny tears, through the bruising of the flesh, and the oppression of the spirit. So have I found it, and I bear my willing witness that sickness has brought me health, loss has conferred gain, and I doubt not that one day death will bring me fuller life.

     Be wise then, dear child of God, and look upon your present affliction as a chastening. “What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” There is not a more profitable instrument in all God’s house than the rod. No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan’s rod; but that is nothing to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah’s rod. Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her travail pangs, joy comes to the house because the man-child is born; and sorrow is to us also, full often, the moment of the birth of our graces. A chastened spirit is a gracious spirit; and how shall we obtain it except we are chastened? Like our Lord Jesus, we learn obedience by the things which we suffer. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without sorrow, and he never will have while the world stands. Let us, therefore, bless God for all his dealings, and in a filial spirit confess, “Thou, Lord, hast chastened me.”

     Consider the psalmist’s view of his affliction a little more carefully. He noted that his trials were sore: he says, “The Lord hath chastened me sore.” Perhaps we are willing to own in general that our trouble is of the Lord; but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the tenderest part of our character, and has cut us to the quick. Are we to believe that this also is, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are. If it be not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from divine permission, where are we? How can a trial be met which is independent of divine rule, and outside of the sacred zone of providential government? It is hopeful when we find that all our ills lie within the ring-fence of omnipotent overruling. It is one comfort that we see a wall of fire round about us, a circle so complete that even the devil, malicious as he is, cannot break through it, to do more than the Lord allows. The camels are gone, the sheep, the oxen, the servants, all are destroyed: all this is most trying; but still it is true— “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” But, see, another messenger comes, and cries, “There came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead.” Might not Job, then, have said, “This is a blow which I cannot bear; for it is evidently from the prince of the power of the air”? No, but even after that, he said, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” When his wife said, “Curse God, and die,” he still blessed God, and held his integrity. He told her that she spoke as one of the foolish women speaketh, and then he wisely added, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” May we stand fast in patience as he did, even when our troubles overflow!

     It is folly to imagine, as we have sometimes done, that we could bear anything except that which we are called upon to endure. We are like the young man who says that he wants a situation. What can you do? He can do anything. That man you never engage, because you know that he can do nothing. So it is with us. If we say, “I could bear anything but this,” we prove our universal impatience. If we had the choice of our crosses, the one we should choose would turn out to be more inconvenient than that which God appoints for us; and yet we will have it that our present cross is unsuitable and specially galling. I would say to any who are of that mind, “If your burden does not fit your shoulder, bear it till it does.” Time will reconcile you to the yoke if grace abides with you. It is not for us to choose our affliction; that remains with him who chooses our inheritance for us. Read well this word, “The Lord hath chastened me sore,” and see the Lord’s hand in the soreness of your trial. Even while the wound is raw, and the smart is fresh, be conscious that the Lord is near.

     Yet there is in the verse a “but”, for the psalmist perceives that his trial is limited; “but he hath not given me over unto death.” Certain of the buts in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have. Before us is a “but” which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to its abyss. There is a limit to the force, the sharpness, the duration, and the number of our trials.

“If God appoints the number ten,

They ne’er can be eleven.”

Whenever the Lord mixes a potion for his people, he weighs each ingredient, measures the bitters, grain by grain, and allows not even a particle in excess to mingle in the draught. Like a careful dispenser, he will not pour out a drop too little or too much.

“To his church, his joy, and treasure,

Every trial works for good:

They are dealt in weight and measure,

Yet how little understood;

Not in anger,

But from his dear covenant love.”

     Our Father’s anger at our sin will never blaze into wrath against us, though in mercy he will smite our sins. Remember, then, this gracious boundary. “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” We have never yet experienced a trouble which might not have been worse. One affliction kills another: the wind never blows east and west at the same time. When the Lord smites you with his left hand, he sustains you with his right hand; as tribulations abound, so do consolations abound through Christ Jesus. The whole band of troubles never comes forth at once. Everything painful is graded and proportioned to the man and his strength, and the object for which it is sent. With the trial the Lord makes the way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Faith can see an end and limit where nature’s dim eye sees endless confusion. Where carnal sense —

“Sees every day new straits attend,

And wonders where the scene will end,”

faith looks over the intervening space, and comforts herself with that which is yet to come. Faith sings pleasant songs when she foots it over weary roads.

“The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,

So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”

The Lord keep your faith alive, my brethren and sisters, and then whatever trials surge around you, you will sit on the Rock of ages, above the waves, and joyfully sing praises unto your divine Deliverer! Oh, how sweet to say, as I now do, “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death”!

     II. This brings me, secondly, to consider THE BELIEVER’S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS. The believer’s comfort under his afflictions is this — “I shall not die, but live.”

     Occasionally this comes in the form of a 'presentiment. I do not think that I am superstitious: I fancy that I am pretty clear of that vice; yet I have had presentiments concerning things to come or not to come; and, moreover, I have met with so many Christian men who, in the time of trouble, have received singular warnings, or sweet assurances of coming deliverance, that I am bound to believe that the Lord does sometimes whisper to the heart of his children, and assure them in trial that they shall not be crushed, and in sickness that they shall not die. How do you understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been speaking against the monks, and various abuses of the church. He was the first man known to history that preached the gospel in England during the Popish ages— we know him as the Morning Star of the Reformation. He was a man so great that, if he had possessed a printing-press, we might never have needed a Luther; for he had even clearer light than that great Reformer. He lacked the means of spreading his doctrine, which the art of printing supplied. He did much: he prepared everything to Luther’s hand; and Luther was but the proclaimer of Wycliffe’s doctrine. Wycliffe was ill— very ill, and the friars came round him, like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity; but they were right glad that their enemy was going to die. So they said to him, “Do you not repent? Before we can give you the viaticum— the last oiling before you die — would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars, and his Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past, and give you the last sacrament in peace.” Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him to sit up; and then he cried with all his strength, “I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord, and to expose the wickedness of the friars.” He did not die, either: death himself could not have killed him then; for he had more work to do, and the Lord made him immortal till it was done. How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy brag; but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do, and he felt that he could not die till it was accomplished. Now, do not be making up presentiments about all sorts of things, because I have said that sometimes the Lord grants them to his saints. This would be a mischievous piece of absurdity. I remember a young woman, who lived not far from here, who had a presentiment that she would die. I do not think that there was really much the matter with her; but she refused to eat, and was likely to be starved. I went to see her, and she told me that she had a presentiment that she should die, and therefore she should not waste food by eating it. She spoke to me very solemnly about this presentiment, and I replied, “I believe there may be such things.” Yes: she was sure I was on her side! Then I went on to say, I once had a presentiment that I was a donkey, and it turned out true in my case; and now I had much the same presentiment about her. This surprised her, and I asked her friends to bring her food. She said she would not eat it; and then I told her that if she was resolved on suicide, I would mention it at a church-meeting that evening, and put her out of the church, since we could not have suicides in our membership. She could not bear to be put out of the church, and began to eat, and it turned out that my presentiment about her was correct; she had been foolish, and she had the good sense to see that it was so. I felt bound to tell you this story, lest you should fancy that I

Would support you in sentimental nonsense. While there are so many stupid people in the world, we have need to give cautions where the many wise do not need them. Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sore sick; and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

     This, however, I only mention by the way. When a believer is in trouble, he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God. The Lord scourges his sons, but he does not slay them. The believer says, “My Father may make me smart with the blows of a cruel one; but will do me no real harm, nor allow anyone else to injure me. He will not lay upon me more than is right, nor above what I am able to bear. He will stay his hand when he sees that I have no strength left. Moreover, I know that even when he brings me very low, still underneath me are the everlasting arms. If the Lord kill, it is to make alive: if he wound, it is that he may heal. I am sure of that.” O believer, never let anything drive you away from this confidence, for it has sure truth for its foundation! The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. It is not killing, but curing, that God means when he takes the sharp lancet in his hand. The nauseous medicine, which makes the heart sick, works the cure of a worse sickness. “His compassions fail not.” He may often put his hand into the bitter box, but he has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has he forsaken us, but with great mercies will he return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord’s fatherly compassion.

     Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin, and his security from punishment. Please to notice the very distinct difference between chastisement and punishment. I do not say between the meaning of the words, but between the two things which just now I would indicate by those terms. Here is a boy who has committed theft. He is brought before a magistrate that he may be punished. Punitive justice will be executed upon him by imprisonment or by a birch rod. Another boy has also stolen— stolen from his father, and he is brought before his father, not to be punished as a law-breaker, but to be chastised. There is a great difference between the punishment awarded by justice, and the chastisement appointed by love. They may be alike in painfulness, but how different in meaning! The father does not give to the child what he would deserve if it were a punishment according to law, but what he thinks will cure him of wrong-doing by making him feel that sin brings sorrow. The magistrate, although he desires the good of the offender, has mainly to consider the law in its bearings upon the whole mass of the population, and he punishes as a matter of justice that which wrongs the commonwealth; but the parent acts on other principles. “The Lord hath chastened me sore,” and in that he has acted a fatherly part; “but he hath not given me over unto death,” which would have been my lot if he had dealt with me as a judge. My heart trembles at his sword, and cries, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” The sentence of justice has been fulfilled upon our Lord, and our comfort is that now there is nothing punitive in all our troubles. “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;” nor will he do so, for he has already laid our sin upon Christ, and Christ has vindicated the law by bearing its penalty, so that nothing more in the way of penalty is demanded by the moral government of God. That which we receive from the rod of the Lord bears the blessed aspect of chastening from a father’s hand; and this is a gladsome fact, which makes even the sharpest smart to be profitable. “Surely the bitterness of death is past,” when, in the case of the believer, even death has ceased to be the penalty of sin, and is changed into a sweet falling asleep upon the bosom of the Well-Beloved, to wake up in his likeness. Every other affliction is changed in the same fashion. Our wasps have become bees: their sting is not the prominent thought, but the honey which they lay up in store. “All things work together for good to them that love God,” and chastisement is chief among those “all things.” What a well of comforting thought is here!

     Furthermore, it is a great blessing to a child of God to feel a full assurance that he has eternal life in Christ Jesus. “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” Notice the words, “Given me over.” It is the most awful thing out of hell to be given over by God. I fear that there are some such persons. Does not the psalmist refer to such when he says, “They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish”? While God’s own people are chastened every morning, and plagued all the day long, the ungodly prosper in the world, and increase in riches. Of his chosen the Lord says, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” But those who are not the Lord’s are left unchastened, because the Lord hath said of them, “Let them alone, they are given unto idols.” They are allowed their transient mirth; let them make the most they can of it, for their end will be desolation.

     Unbroken prosperity and undisturbed health may be the signs of being “given over unto death”; and they are such in cases where sin is committed without pangs of conscience, or apprehensions of judgment. Such freedom from fear may be maintained even in death: “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.” All goes quietly with them: “Like sheep they are laid in the grave.” But “in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments.” To be given over unto death is often followed by callousness, presumption, and bravado; but it is a dreadful doom, the direst sentence from the throne of judgment as to this life. But you, dear child of God, have this comfort, he has not given you over, he is thinking upon you. By scourging you, he is proving that he has not given you over. Men do not prune the vine they mean to uproot; nor thresh out the weeds which they mean to burn. He who is chastened is not given over unto destruction. Years ago, I was taken very ill, in Marseilles, while attempting to come home to England. As I lay in my bed, it seemed as if the cruel mistral wind was driving through my bones, and breaking them with agony. I ordered a fire to be kindled; but when I saw the man begin to light it with a bundle of little branches, I cried out to him, “Pray let me look at that.” I found that he was using the dry prunings of the vine, and the tears were in my eyes as I remembered the words— “Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Comfort followed, for I thought, “I am not unfeeling, like those dried-up shoots; but I am the bleeding vine, which is sharply cut with the pruning-knife; I feel the keen blade in every part of me.” Then could I say, “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over.” What joy lies in this, “He hath not given me over”! As long as the father chastens his boy, he has hope of him; if he ceased to do so altogether, we might fear that he thought him too bad to be reclaimed. Be glad, then, dear child of God, that since the Lord chastens you sore, he has not erased your name from his heart, and his hands, nor yielded you up to your enemy’s power.

     Another meaning may be found in this text, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.” We are comforted by reliance upon God’s power for success in our life-work. The critics said — and I must quote this because this sermon is very much a personal one— the critics said, when the lad commenced his preaching, that it was a nine days’ wonder, and would soon come to an end. When the people joined the church in great numbers, they were “a parcel of boys and girls.” Many of those “boys and girls” are here to-night, faithful to God unto this hour. Then there came upon us a heavy, heavy stroke— a sore chastening, which those of us who were present never will forget if we live for a century; and we seemed to be made the reproach of all men, through an accident which we could not have foreseen or prevented. But still the testimony for God in this place, by the same voice, has not ceased, nor lost its power. Still the people throng to hear the gospel after these thirty years and more, and still the doctrines of grace are to the front, notwithstanding all opposition. In the darkest hour of my ministry, I might have declared, “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” If you have been set on fire by a divine truth, the world cannot put an extinguisher upon you. That candle which God has lighted, the devils in hell cannot blow out. If you are commissioned of God to do a work, give your whole heart to it, trust in the Lord, and you will not fail. I bear my joyful witness to the power of God to work mightily by the most insignificant of instruments.

“The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.”

     Once more, though we may die, we are sustained by the expectation of immortality. When we gather up our feet in our last bed, we may utter this text in a full and sweet sense, “I shall not die, but live.” When Wycliffe died as to his body, the real Wycliffe did not die. Some of his books were carried to Bohemia, and John Huss learned the gospel from them, and began to preach. They burnt John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; but Huss foretold, as he died, that another would arise after him, whom they should not be able to put down; and in due time he more than lived again in Luther. Is Luther dead? Is Calvin dead to-day? That last man the moderns have tried to bury in a dunghill of misrepresentation; but he lives, and will live, and the truths that he taught will survive all the calumniators that have sought to poison it. Die! Often the death of a man is a kind of new birth to him; when he himself is gone physically, he spiritually survives, and from his grave there shoots up a tree of life whose leaves heal nations. O worker for God, death cannot touch thy sacred mission! Be thou content to die if the truth shall live the better because thou diest. Be thou content to die, because death may be to thee the enlargement of thine influence. Good men die as dies the seed-corn which thereby abideth not alone. When saints are apparently laid in the earth, they quit the earth, and rise and mount to heaven-gate, and enter into immortality. No, when the sepulchre receives this mortal frame, we shall not die, but live. Then shall we come to our true stature and beauty, and put on our royal robes, our glorious Sabbath-dress.

     III. So I finish with just two or three words on THE BELIEVER’S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

     Here is declaration. If we had no troubles, we should have all the less to declare. A person who has had no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Such persons despise the afflicted, and suspect the character of the choicest of men, for lack of power to understand them. What does that man know about the sea who has only walked the beach? Get with an old sailor, who has been a dozen times round the world, and often wrecked, and he will interest you. So the much-tried Christian has great wonders to declare, and these are chiefly the works of the Lord; for “they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.” Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble, and how he delivers out of it, and they declare his works openly: they cannot help doing so. They are so interested themselves in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic over it; and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out.

     If you read the chapter further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer adoration. They are so charmed with what God has done for them, that they laud and magnify the name of the Lord, saying, “I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.” The saints of God, when they are rescued from their sorrows, are sure to sing, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”

     This done, they make a further dedication of themselves to their delivering God. As the psalm puts it, “God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.” It was very dark! It was very, very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We were frozen with fear. We thought that we were as dead men, laid out for burial; when suddenly the Lord’s face shone in upon us, and all darkness was gone, and we leaped into joyful security, crying “God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.” We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticisms— they were impossible. We said, “God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.” In the fourth watch of the night, in the prison where the cold stone shut us in, where the darkness had never known a candle, there a light shone round about us, and an angel smote us on the side, and bade us put on our sandals, and gird ourselves, and follow him. We obeyed the word, and our chains fell off; and when we came to the iron gate which had always been our horror, it opened of its own accord, and we went out into the streets of the city, and we scarcely felt that it could be true, but thought we saw a vision. But when we had considered the thing, and found it was even ourselves, and ourselves set in a largo place at perfect liberty, then we said, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” God hath showed us light, and we will live to him for ever and for ever. Oh, you tried believers, who have, nevertheless, not been given over unto death, who can say to-night, “I shall not die, but live,” present yourselves anew unto your delivering

Lord as living sacrifices through Jesus Christ your Lord! Amen.