

# Meditations on the Psalms

## Volume Five: Psalms 41-50

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## **1. Psalm Forty-One**

### **The Generous Benefactor**

**To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.**

**1 Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.**

**2 The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.**

**3 The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed.**

**4 I said, "LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."**

**5 My enemies speak evil of me: "When will he die, and his name perish?"**

**6 And if he comes to see me, he speaks lies; his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes out, he tells it.**

**7 All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they devise my hurt.**

**8 "An evil disease," they say, "clings to him. And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more."**

**9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.**

**10 But You, O LORD, be merciful to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them.**

**11 By this I know that You are well pleased with me, because my enemy does not triumph over me.**

**12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever.**

**13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.**

This psalm marks the end of the first part of the book of Psalms, which corresponds with the Book of Genesis, whose subject is the supremacy and fall of man. Like Psalm One, it starts with a beatitude. Our psalm depicts the generous, extraordinary man who gives to the poor and looks after the needy. It also depicts the fallen man, who is seen in the enemies of the generous benefactor that want him to die and his name to be blotted out. They envy him and cannot bear his goodness. Sick souls cannot bear the light of goodness and beneficence. After having been created in the likeness and image of God, they were distorted due to disobedience. There is a world of difference between man as God wants him to be and man

as he is. He has been created in honour, but he misbehaves and commits evil.

David wrote this psalm when he was sick, persecuted or rejected. He was generous with those around him and expected them to repay him in kind, but the opposite happened. Maybe he was describing the same situation when he said, "I paced about as though he were my friend or brother... But...they rejoiced and gathered together; attackers gathered against me" (Psalm 35:14,15). Perhaps David wrote this psalm about Ahitophel his friend, who deserted him to become Absalom's counsellor in his unsuccessful attempt to overthrow his fathers government at a time when David was helpless and could not even defend himself (2 Samuel 15).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The happiness of the generous benefactor (verses 1-4)
- Second: The complaint of the generous benefactor (verses 5-9)
- Third: The prayer of the generous benefactor (verse 10)
- Fourth: The confidence of the generous benefactor (verses 11,12)
- Fifth: A final doxology (verse 13)

### **1.1. First: The Happiness of the Generous Benefactor**

#### **(verses 1-4)**

1. **The generous is one happy because the Lord delivers him:** "Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble"(verse 1). The poor means those who lack money, as well as the weak, the sick, the depressed or the grieving who need someone to visit him and ask after him. The psalmist blesses the one who looks after the poor who need money, the weak who need support, or the depressed who need comfort, which fulfils Christ's statement: "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to you? He will reply, Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:35-40). Christ says in the fifth beatitude (Matthew 5:7), "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy in the day of trouble, which is the day of unexpected misfortunes, when a man is at peace and suddenly disasters hit him, when he is shocked because he is taken unawares." In the day of unexpected trouble God stands by the generous benefactor and lifts him above the shock. How often was David on the verge of falling into Saul's hands, and how often did the Lord deliver him? Saul directed the spear

toward him twice to kill him, but the spear hit the wall and he was delivered (1 Samuel 18:11). As Saul went into the cave in which David was sleeping, God kept David so that Saul did not see him (1 Samuel 24:3-5).

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, we find the poor man cast down at the rich mans door, suffering from festering boils, while the rich man was feasting in his palace (Luke 16:19-31). Christ did refer to any sin the rich man had done, for the problem did not lie in his source of revenue nor in his dissipated spending for evil purposes. His fault lay in not considering the poor and never thinking of sending any aid. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

2. **The generous one is happy because the Lord keeps him alive:** "The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies"(verse 2). The Lord keeps the benefactor who considers the poor alive, gives him a meaningful and significant life on earth, and eternal life and immortality in heaven. He does this because Christ lives in him, investing His own life in him. He is blessed on the earth and says together with Job, "When the ear heard, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw, then it approved me; because I delivered the poor who cried out, and the fatherless and he who had no helper" (Job 29:11,12). The Lord will not deliver him to the will of his adversaries, as he had already prayed, "Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries" (Psalm 27:12).
3. **The generous one is happy because the Lord strengthens him on his sickbed:** "The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed"(verse 3). He will sustain him so that he won't go down to an early grave. This is met with the response: "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great" (Psalm 18:35). When he is afflicted with illness, the Lord attends to him and treats him like a man who is comforted by his mother (Isaiah 66:13), as she props up his head and straightens the cushions under him to ensure maximum comfort. God looks after the believer in all different stages of life, comforts him in all situations, because the Lord's eyes are always on those who love Him.
4. **The generous one is happy because the Lord forgives him:** "I said, Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You"(verse 4). The psalmist relates sickness to sin; for the divine punishment of sickness may be the result of falling away from God. It should cause us to say, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1). Nevertheless, sickness may not be a result of sin, as Christ said in the case of the man born blind, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3). We fall ill whether we sin or not. But during our sickness the Lord cleanses us to draw us nearer to Himself and more dependent on Him, and say, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise"

(Jeremiah 17:14). It is worthy of us as believers to lead a life of confession to God no matter how pure our lives appear to us or to others, for we are not righteous in our own right, but draw on His righteousness. It is worthy of us also to realise that God did not promise us permanent health and comfort, but promised to be with us and comfort us in health as well as in sickness.

## 1.2. Second: The Complaint of the Generous Benefactor

### (verses 5-9)

The blessings of the generous man are certain and manifold, but his life is not empty of problems that cause him to complain:

#### 1. Problems from his enemies:

1. **He complains of their evil intention:** "My enemies speak evil of me: When will he die, and his name perish?"(verse 5). His enemies would like him to die and his memory to perish, saying, "Let his posterity be cut off, and in the generation following let their name be blotted out" (Psalm 109:13). It is true that David would die at the time God appointed to him, but his name would not perish. David died and moved on from our world to live in the divine Presence forever, because where the Master is there also will the servant be, and where the Teacher is there also will His disciple be (John 14:3). But his memory will never perish, and "The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance" (Psalm 112:6). David still lives till today through his psalms that fill our hearts with joy and trust in the Lord, because they express mans intimate relationship with God.
2. **He complains of their dissimulation:** "And if he comes to see me, he speaks vain words; his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes out, he tells it"(verse 6). While David lay ill, his enemies visited him, and in dissimulation expressed kind feelings, but they were in fact gathering information about him to attack and mock him. No sooner did they leave him than they started talking against him and broadcast all they knew about him, distorting his words to defame him.
3. **He complains of their whispering:** "All who hate me whisper together against me; against me they devise my hurt. An evil disease, they say, clings to him. And now that lies down, he will rise up no more"(verses 7,8). After they finished visiting him, they met the rest of his enemies waiting outside to break the news to them. They whispered together secretly, hoping for the worst and wishing this would be his last illness, which would bring him down to an early grave. The prophet said, "For I heard many mocking... Report, they say, and we will report it! All my acquaintances waited for my stumbling, saying, 'Perhaps he can be induced; then we will prevail against him'" (Jeremiah 20:10).

#### 2. Problems from his friends: "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate

my bread, has lifted up his heel against me"(verse 9). Perhaps by my familiar friend in whom I trusted David meant Ahithophel, his counsellor who ate at his table, but betrayed him and made a treacherous agreement with Absalom in the unsuccessful coup against him (2 Samuel 15:12, 31). At the Last Supper, Christ quoted this verse and applied it to Judas Iscariot: "He who eats My bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me" (John 13:18). Christ, however, did not quote the first part of the verse that says, "in whom I trusted", since He knew who was going to betray Him (John 13:21). This verse describes David's lamentable situation on the one side, and is a Messianic prophecy on the other. It speaks of Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus in spite of His full knowledge of it ahead of time.

### **1.3. Third: The Prayer of the Generous Benefactor**

#### **(verse 10)**

The psalmist lifted up a prayer to God in which he made two requests:

1. **He asked for the Lord's mercy:** "But You, O Lord, be merciful to me"(verse 10a). David is aware of God's merciful nature, and of his own need of such mercifulness. He recognises his frailty, inadequacy and worthlessness, although the Scripture testified to his heart as being after God's own (Acts 13:2). "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1). Yet, David sees his situation as it is, and realises how much he needs God's mercy, as Martin Luther said, I will spend my life begging for God's mercy.
2. **He asked the Lord to raise him up:** "And raise me up, that I might repay them"(verse 10b). Here David prays as a king who expects God to raise him up from his sickbed or out of his calamity, and restore him to his throne in order to punish those who betrayed him and lifted up their heels against him. As God raises him up, he says, "He also brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps" (Psalm 40:2). Today we realise that the greatest lifting up is: "You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1-6). He raised us up, and made us sit in the heavenly places, just as He raised up Jairus daughter and made her stand on her feet (Mark 5:41-42). Everyone who receives forgiveness for his sins through God's kindness should stand up on his feet and witness about Christ's love, who called us all to tell what great things the Lord has done for us, and how He has had compassion on us.

### **1.4. Fourth: The Confidence of the Generous Benefactor**

#### **(verse 11,12)**

David expresses his confidence in the Lord regarding two matters:

1. **God's approval of him:** "By this I know that You are well pleased with me, because my enemy does not triumph over me"(verse 11). David was certain that God approved of him when he was not defeated by his enemy. God did not let him be defeated; He rather made his enemies to be at peace with him. For God to be pleased with us means that there isn't any condemnation against us, because we have been justified by faith (Romans 8:1; 5:1).
2. **God's support of him:** "As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever"(verse 12). To uphold is to support, strengthen and fasten in place. When the enemy is out to attack the believers reputation his own integrity upholds him, because he is innocent of what the enemy accuses him of. The psalmist believes that God upheld him since he was a man of integrity, which means uprightness of intention, not absolute perfection. Integrity is a work and gift of the Lord; for His Holy Spirit who dwells in the believer upholds him in His own perfection, so that he could stand up before God forever. The more we trust the Lord the more we will overcome the weaknesses of the flesh.

The enemies have sought the death of the psalmist and destruction of his name (verse 5). But he is sure that he will stand before the King of kings, who will make His promise good, "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). And His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads (Revelations 22:3,4).

## **1.5. Fifth: A Final Doxology**

### **(verse 13)**

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen"(verse 13). This is a doxology that is repeated at the end of each of the five sections of the Psalms. It marks the end of Book One, which contains Psalms 1-41. It also marks the end of Book Two (Psalms 42-72, see Psalm 72:19), and Book Three (Psalms 73-89, see Psalm 89:52), Book Four (Psalm 90-106, see Psalm 106:48). Book Five, however, (Psalm 107-150) ends with Psalm 150 which is full of glorification to the Lord!

How many are the reasons for blessing and glorifying the Lord! Blessed is God to whom His people belong. He is the God of Israel, worthy to be praised for who He is, as well as for what He does. He is all perfection and love; He has no deception, guile. We bless Him for what He has done for us through the years. He saved us from our sin, redeemed us from its power, adopted us, and wonderfully and lovingly cared for us. Blessed is the Lord on the earth- in His creatures, in the lives of the believers, "That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), as well as in eternity when the angels and the saints will shout to Him. Blessed is He from everlasting to everlasting, because He is the God of the past, present and future. We confirm this doxology by saying, Amen and Amen, namely: May it be so! Answer, Lord, and grant us our request because we call You with all



our heart.

## 1.6. Questions

1. Why is the person who helps the poor happy?
2. The person who helps the poor is confident of two things. Name them.

## 2. Psalms Forty-Two and Forty-Three

### Thirst for God

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the Hill Mizar.

7 Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me.

8 The LORD will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me -- A prayer to the God of my life.

9 I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

10 As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 43

1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!

2 For You are the God of my strength; why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

**3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.**

**4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.**

**5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.**

David wrote Psalm 42 and 43 after the unsuccessful coup of his son Absalom against him (cf. the introduction to Psalm 3). Despite his disquiet and dejection at the time, David found rest in his hope in the Lord. He started to praise the Lord because He was David's salvation. The two psalms consist of two stanzas, each of them ending in a refrain: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God" (42:5,11;43:5). Psalm 42 and 43 show David's spiritual desires during that painful stage. He reveals in Psalm 42 the state of a pious man who suffers pain due to his absence from the place of worship (verses 1-5), and describes the way to find comfort during that time of removal (verse 6-11). In Psalm 43:1-5 he shows the desires of a pious man while undergoing that stage. Each of these three ideas ends in a declaration of hope: "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him."

The two psalms together include the following:

- First: The state of the pious (42:1-5)
- Second: The dejection and comfort of the pious (42:6-11)
- Third: The desires of the pious (43:1-5)

## **2.1. First: The State of the Pious**

### **(verses 1-5)**

1. **A state of desire:** "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God"(verses 1,2). David compares himself to deer and gazelles that need plenty of water, especially in the hot, dry seasons. He cries out to God, the fountain of living water: "O Lord, ... they are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life..." (Psalm 36:6,8,9). The soul will never be satisfied save by the living God. No one is happier than the living man; he receives new life from God and is filled with His Lord, who keeps and guarantees the continuity of this life. He has a constant relationship with his God. And there is no one more miserable than those whom the Lord reproves with the words: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns- broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah

2:13).

When David escaped from Absalom, away from the house of the Lord, Zadok the priest and the Levites carried the ark of the Lord to where David was. He ordered them to take it back to its place, saying, "If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His habitation" (2 Samuel 15:25). David relates God's pleasure with him to his appearance in God's presence in His temple for worship. He always felt that way; one could always hear him say, "My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land" (Psalm 63:1). God's love filled his heart, and created within him a strong longing for God, causing him to want to appear before the Lord.

David had lost a lot when he fled from Absalom: his throne, authority and the comfort of his palace. He also lost his reputation owing to his sons misconduct. However, he considered his loss of access to the house of the Lord to be his real loss; therefore he expressed his deep desire to worship in the house of the Lord. We only feel the value of the privilege of worship when we are deprived of it. When we feel spiritual desires, we know that God has not left us, just as we have not left Him!

Christians all over the world need to cultivate a special desire for the house of the Lord on the Lord's day, especially in countries where the Lord's day is an official work day. They should exert a special effort to be able to say along with David, When shall I come and appear before God? on the Lord's day and in the house of the Lord.

## 2. **A state of sorrow (verses 3,4):**

1. **Because of the enemy's reproach:** "My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God?"(verse 3). Feeling sorry for his removal from the house of the Lord, the psalmist went without food, and his tears replaced his bread! It grieved him even more to have his enemies make fun of him because of his godliness and worship of God. They said to him, "Where is your God, to whom you have continually prayed, offered worship, and about whom you composed psalms? You told us about many spiritual experiences when He took you from following the sheep and brought you to the throne. You say you put your trust in Him and that He is pleased with you. Now you are far away from Him, and He is far away from you. Your Lord has left you!" In that critical time Shimea cursed king David and said to him, "The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul ... So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!" (2 Samuel 16:8). Yet, it was the Lord who chose David to be king and handed the rule to him.

When God lets us fall into sufferings and trials, we often hear that question: "Where is your God?" This question was raised when the serpent bit Paul's hand. Those around him thought he was a criminal whom justice did not permit to live, but the

- Lord rescued him through a miracle (Acts 28:3-5). This always happens to those who love God. If it happens with you, do not give up; put your hope in God.
2. **Because of being deprived from the house of the Lord:** "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God. With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept the pilgrim feast"(verse 4). David's sorrow increased as he looked back to the happy days when he used to go to the house of the Lord to worship and keep the feast. He would lead the congregation from all around the kingdom to the feast. They would go up the hill on which the house of the Lord was built, singing the psalms of jubilation and praise that he wrote for the happy occasion. "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10). It is true that sorrow increases as the person recalls past joys, and only someone who is deprived of something can appreciate its beauty. David, however, replied to the reproaches of his mockers by stating that he worshipped God in spirit and truth, and that this faithful God would not forsake him in his time of trouble.
  3. **A state of hope:** "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance"(verse 5). The psalmist's soul was cast down under the pressure of the painful circumstances he was going through, but he did not remain in that condition. He soon rallied himself and lifted his face up to the place from where help comes. He held a conversation with his soul in steadfast faith, and believed on the divine hope, contrary to human expectation, just as his ancestor Abraham did (Romans 4:18). He said to himself, "For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance namely, for the salvation that the Lord provides. Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:7).

As the shadow of the heavy cross fell on Christ, he said, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (John 12:27). Trouble melted away in view of the great responsibility of providing salvation for sinful men.

When overcome with despair, you might join Jacob in his complaint as he said, "All these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36). You might feel like saying, "May the day perish on which I was born" (Job 3:3), or joining the Baptist in prison as he expressed doubt and sent two of his disciples to ask Christ: "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3). You will hear His voice saying to you, "For I am the Lord your God ... Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honoured, and I have loved you" (Isaiah 43:3,4). Then you will come out of despair into hope saying, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalm 18:1,2). Then you will shout in thankfulness: "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

## **2.2. Second: The Dejection and Comfort of the Pious**

### **(verses 6-11)**

#### **1. The reason for dejection (verses 6,7):**

- 1. Removal from the house of the Lord:** "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the Hill Mizar"(verse 6). David explained that his dejection was caused by his removal from the house of God to the land of the Jordan, the mountains of Hermon and the Hill Mizar, to which he fled from his son. All of them are at the farthest border of Canaan, far from the house of the Lord. He was sad for being deprived of the house of the Lord.

In mentioning the reason for his dejection, he expressed hope. In verse 4 he mentioned his pains and tears, "I remember these things." This led to despondency. But in verse 6 he mentioned God, "Therefore I will remember You, and got his hope back."

In verse 5 he talked with himself about his being cast down under the weight of concern: "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" But in verse 6 he moved to the resolution of the problem. He addressed God and complained to Him of his concern: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me."

- 2. Persistence of disasters:** "Deep calls unto deep at the voice of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me"(verse 7). His intense dejection was like successive, angry waves, as though heavy showers of water tumbled down upon him followed by even heavier ones so that he was almost drowned. Disasters did not come to him one at a time, but broke over him like a tumultuous torrent. Moreover they came from home as well as from friends. Therefore he went about wondering in anguish, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?"

When we ask our soul, "Why are you cast down?" we learn that it is weak, helpless, without resources. Man continually goes around his soul in a sad, vicious circle. But David teaches us that the way to get out of this circle is to turn to the Lord and say to Him, "My God, I lift up my plea of injustice and the trouble of my soul. I remember You and thank You. May the countenance of the Lord be always before us."

#### **2. The cure for dejection (verses 8,9):**

1. **Divine mercy:** "The Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime"(verse 8a). Although the psalmist is cast down and weeps, he still knows that the loving and merciful God always cares for His mournful servant. In the daytime God commands His loving-kindness to surround him, and in the nightfall He keeps him and gives him rest. Who keeps our soul among the living, and does not allow our feet to be moved (Psalm 66:9).
2. **Prayer:** "And in the night His song shall be with me- a prayer to the God of life. I will say to God my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of my enemy?"(verses 8b,9). David expresses his feelings and hopes in the Lord through words of prayer and a song of praise to the God in whom he lives and moves and has his being.
3. **The return of dejection:** "As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"(verse 10). The intellect can be convinced of many great facts, but the heart does not always follow the intellect and act on them. David knew by intellect that God was his rock and refuge, and that He would never forsake those who love Him. His heavy heart, however, could not rest assured. He began to be depressed once more. He said that his enemies were harassing him again and reproaching him every day that his God left him. It is true that they had told him so before, and it is true that he overcame, by the grace of God, the painful effects of that false statement, and his heart was filled with what his intellect was convinced of. Yet, the repetition of the enemies reproach weakened his hope, and he asked God once more, "Why have you forgotten me?" His adversaries crushed his bones with their disheartening words, so he sadly approached God in prayer. He spread all that he heard before God, just as his descendant Hezekiah after him spread his enemies messages before the Lord (Isaiah 37:14).
4. **The end of dejection:** "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God"(verse 11). There is hope, because God lives and is present. Compare this verse with verse 5 that says, I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. The help of God's countenance became the help of David's countenance. The One who dwells in heaven became the God of the psalmist to whom he belongs. He spoke of a God that saves, and now he speaks of the God who saves him. Paul also says of Him, "The God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23). Who else is worthy of worship? Only God is worthy. Let our motto be: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

### **2.3. Third: The Desires of the Pious (chapter 43, verses 1-5)**

Having described his condition in the countries that lie far away from the house of God, and his depression on the inside and the outside, David portrays three desires in Psalm 43: A desire to be proven innocent of the enemy's accusations (verses 1,2), a desire to worship again in the house of God (verses 3,4) and a desire for a happy life (verse 5).

1. **A desire to be proven innocent of the unjust accusations:** "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! For You are the God of my strength; why do you cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"(verses 1,2). David pleads with God to assume his cause as His own, and stand as an advocate for him against an unjust nation and a deceitful man, in order to prove him innocent. By the deceitful and unjust man he meant his son Absalom who led an unsuccessful revolt against him and levelled many false accusations against him. It could also describe his sly and deceitful counsellor Ahithophel the Gilonite, who turned against him and joined Absalom. The people believe what the recalcitrant son said about his father. Many of them sided with falsehood and supported the son, which caused David to describe them as an ungodly nation.

David knew that God was his fortress. He asked himself: "Why does He reject me? Why does He let me go about mourning in foreign lands, driven away by my enemy? To whom shall I go? The only protection is in the good God?" He sounded as though he was saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

2. **A desire to worship again in the house of God:** "Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God"(verses 3,4). The psalmist asked for God's light and truth to guide him to the house of the Lord, as if light and truth were two people, so that the countenance of the Lord should shine upon him with favour as it did his ancestors in the Sinai Desert. In their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, He walked before them in a pillar of cloud to lead the way by day, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light (Exodus 13:21). He requested God's light and truth from the Urim and Thumim (i.e. lights and perfections) that were put on the breastplate of judgement over Aaron's heart when he went into the Holy of Holies before the Lord. For Aaron bore the judgement of the children of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually (Exodus 28:30).

The purpose for requesting such guidance is to be found in the house of God for worship. The psalmist says, "Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy" (verse 4a). David rejoices and delights in offering up sacrifices in the house of God. On His altar he offers a burnt sacrifice to atone for his sin and win God's favour (Leviticus 1:3-9), a sin offering to atone for his unintentional sins (Leviticus 4:1-5:13), a trespass offering to atone for iniquity and as a restitution for the harm that he has done to God's judgements (Leviticus 5:14-6:7) and a peace offering to express his gratitude to God (Leviticus

3:1-5). All these sacrifices served as symbols for the redeeming Christ, the great sacrifice, who offered Himself on our behalf, and obtained for us eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). "Knowing that you were ... redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Can we picture David at the end of the land of Canaan, being rebelled against by his son and reproached by his enemies, yet daring with confidence to hope that he would offer to the Lord an acceptable sacrifice, express his joy in God my exceeding joy (verse 4a) and sing, on the harp I will praise You (verse 4b)? These are the desires of a believer who experienced the Lord, loves Him and considers his worship in joy, jubilation and praise the most important thing there is.

3. **A desire for a happy life:** "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God"(verse 5). The psalmist repeats what he said to his soul, and encourages it to hope in God, because he will yet praise Him for being his help and his God. I call you to experience the goodness of your God, who delivers you from all despair, and brings you out from any depression you may have, to enjoy the happy life God planned for you. He is the help of your countenance. Build a personal relationship with God through repentance and obedience. Then you will call Him my God and He will call you My servant, son and beloved. Your heart will always yearn for His house, to be found in His presence.

## 2.4. Questions

1. What is the pious person panting for?
2. What was the reason for ending his dilemma?

## 3. Psalm Forty-Four

### The God of the Past, the Present and the Future

To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.

**1** We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old:

**2** You drove out the nations with Your hand, but them You planted; You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out.

**3** For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favoured them.

**4** You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob.

**5** Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up



against us.

**6 For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me.**

**7 But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who hated us.**

**8 In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah**

**9 But You have cast us off and put us to shame, and You do not go out with our armies.**

**10 You make us turn back from the enemy, and those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.**

**11 You have given us up like sheep intended for food, and have scattered us among the nations.**

**12 You sell Your people for next to nothing, and are not enriched by selling them.**

**13 You make us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to those all around us.**

**14 You make us a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples.**

**15 My dishonour is continually before me, and the shame of my face has covered me,**

**16 Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the enemy and the avenger.**

**17 All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant.**

**18 Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way;**

**19 But You have severely broken us in the place of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death.**

**20 If we had forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a foreign god,**

**21 Would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.**

**22 Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**

**23 Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever.**

**24 Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression?**

**25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our body clings to the ground.**

**26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for Your mercies' sake.**

The psalm is the cry of believers who are persecuted though innocent. The psalmist does not mention that they were unfaithful to their God's covenant, yet they suffer defeat and derision from their enemies. Their father and grandfathers had taken God as their God, just as they took Him as Master and Lord in all the stages of their lives. They gloried in His holy name. Suddenly, something unexpected happened: God cast them off and shamed them! So they reprove gently: "O God of our fathers, how can you leave us in this situation?" They ended the psalm with a prayer: "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Your mercies sake."

Delitzsch linked this psalm and Psalm 60, and compared Psalm 44:9,23 to 60:1,10 and 44:5 to 60:12 and 44:3 to 60:5. He says that the writing of the two psalms was occasioned by an Edomite military raid against the kingdom of Judah at a time when David was busy fighting the Ammonites and the Arameans. The people recalled their previous triumphs over the enemies, and required God to support them and give them victory.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: God is the God of the past (verses 1-3)
- Second: God is the God of the present and the future (verses 4-8)
- Third: The painful experience (verses 9-16)
- Fourth: The announcement of innocence (verses 17-22)
- Fifth: A prayer (verses 23-26)

### 3.1. First: God is the God of the Past

#### (verses 1-3)

1. **Our fathers have told us:** "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what deeds You did in their days, in days of old"(verse 1). God wrought deeds for His people in the past due to His grace, not their worthiness. He drove out the inhabitants of Canaan before them and gave them a dwelling in their land. He commanded His people to reflect on the past and not to forget it. Some of that history must have remained in the memory of the people before it was written down. Happy is the man who speaks of God's deeds for his fathers and grandfathers, and remembers the faith of his father, mother and grandfather, as Gideon did, "Where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about?" (Judges 6:13). Timothy also could glory in this genuine faith, which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and in him too (2 Timothy 1:5). God's work in the past is not an experience of just one individual, an emotional experience or mere imagination; it is a living history and matter of fact in the history of all God's people. The Lord is the God of the past, the God of the fathers and grandfathers, the God of old, the Refuge (Deuteronomy 33:27). God's people do not approach God empty-handed; they use the experiences of the past to strengthen them in their present day and drive them to trust the Lord more in the future. Our fathers have told us about what God did in their lives, so let us do the same with our children, "That you may tell in the hearing of your son and your sons son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 10:2). "One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).
2. **He rooted out the nations and planted His own people:** "You drove out the nations

with Your hand, but them You planted; You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out"(verse 2). This was in fulfilment of a prophecy "You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling" (Exodus 15:17). "You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations and planted it ... She sent out her boughs to the Sea, and her branches to the River" (Psalm 80:8,11).

3. **Not due to their strength, but because He favoured them:** "For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own army save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favoured them"(verse 3). God destroyed antagonistic nations, and extended the body of believers to grow; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against them. They possessed the land, not by their own strength or sword. He had forewarned them, "Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you ... God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness" (Deuteronomy 9:4-6). "For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before you until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever" (Joshua 4:23,24). He brought down the walls of Jericho before their eyes, and all the glory went to Him.

### **3.2. Second: God is the God of the Present and the Future (verses 4-8)**

Having reflected on God's past work, the psalmist had courage, confidence and security in the present and the future. He was with the fathers and fulfilled His promises to them, so he must be with the children and fulfil His promises to them as well. He does not change. He is the King and they are His subjects. Jacob said of Him, "The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil" (Genesis 48:15,16). The psalmist bases his confidence on five facts:

1. **God is his King:** "You are my King, O God"(verse 4a). The king plans for his kingdom and defends his people, who should listen to and obey his instructions. Moses said to God, "If I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people" (Exodus 33:13).
2. **God answers prayer:** "Command victories for Jacob"(verse 4b). He had saved them before, and He must save them today from sickness, trouble and sin. They know His power and the extent of His authority, therefore they call upon Him to command their

salvation from all trouble.

3. **God is powerful:** "Through You we will push down our enemies; through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us"(verse 5). The psalmist uses an allegory based on the weapons that were common at his time, like oxen that push down and elephants that trample. Moses had blessed the tribe of Joseph, saying, "His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like the horns of a wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth" (Deuteronomy 33:17).
4. **All things are futile apart from God:** "For I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me"(verse 6). It was God who said, "Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword of battle, by horses of horsemen" (Hosea 1:7).
5. **God is faithful:** "But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put to shame those who have hated us. In God we boast all day long, and praise Your name forever"(verses 7,8). These are the experiences of the people of the Lord as their fathers also experienced before them. They have nothing to boast in except for their belonging to the Lord and their dependence on His divine love that supports them. They will continue singing a song of triumph.

### 3.3. Third: The Painful Experience

#### (verses 9-16)

The psalmist spoke of the greatness of God's deeds with His people in the past, and on this he based their confidence in Him in the present and the future. He also mentioned that the reality contradicted their expectations. For this reason he demanded it from the Lord. He had delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and allowed the attackers to deride them.

1. **The cause for the painful experience:** "But You have cast us off and put us to shame, and You do not go out with our armies"(verse 9). The psalmist feels pain because the powerful, faithful, divine King, who listens to prayer, has rejected His people and put them to shame- their enemies defeated them. The Israelites sometimes took the ark to go before them in battle, symbolising God's presence with them (Numbers 10:35). When defeat came, the psalmist felt like telling God that He had rejected His people and no longer went out with their soldiers.
2. **A description of the painful experience (verses 10,11):**
  1. **Defeat:** "You make us turn back from the enemy"(verse 10a).
  2. **Spoil:** "And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves. You have given us up like sheep intended for food"(verses 10b,11a). Some of them were slaughtered like sheep, and some were sold as slaves. They were driven away from their home and the temple of their worship (Joel 3:6).

3. **Captivity:** "And have scattered us among the nations"(verse 11b). But, "Has God cast away His people? Certainly not! ... God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:1,2).
3. **The result of the painful experience (verses 12-16):**
  1. **Reproving the Lord:** "You sell Your people for naught, and are not enriched by their price"(verse 12). Those in pain reprove the Lord for selling them for nothing, as if they are not worth their price! But it has never happened that God sold His people; on the contrary, He bought them, not with silver or gold, but with His precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18,19). The Holy Spirit, however, recorded the peoples reproof of the Lord for us, to emphasise that our reproof of Him will be accepted and taken care of.
  2. **The enemy's derision:** "You make us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to those around us. You make us a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples"(verses 13,14). Their Philistine, Edomite, Ammonite and Aramean neighbours envied and grudged them. Seeing their defeat, they gloated over them and derided them, because the God in whom they gloried let them down. "All who pass by clap their hands at you; they hiss and shake their heads ...: Is this the city that is called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?" (Lamentations 2:15).
  3. **Inferiority:** "My dishonour is continually before me, and the shame of my face has covered me, because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the enemy and the avenger"(verses 15,16). Their defeat loomed great before them, people reproached and reviled them and shame showed on their faces and covered them. They felt inferior and insignificant. No doubt the loving God allows believers to be punished or purified by pain. When they feel worthless they lean more on divine mercies, and the Lord gives them blessings to relieve their pain.

### 3.4. Fourth: The Announcement of Innocence (verses 17-22)

In these verses the psalmist says that both he and his people do not deserve this harsh treatment from God, because they suffer from their enemies on account of belonging to Him.

1. **They have not been unfaithful to the Lord's covenant:** "All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way; but You have severely broken us in the place of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death"(verses 17-19). There was a covenant between the Lord and His people. It started with His friend Abraham (Genesis 17:7), and was confirmed to the people in Sinai (Exodus 19:5; 24:7,8). Circumcision served as a sign for the covenant (Genesis 17:10-11), the ark of the

covenant symbolised it (Numbers 10:33) and the ten commandments formed its constitution (Deuteronomy 9:9). The psalmist emphasises that his people did not deal falsely with the covenant at their time of defeat, as some of their forefathers had done. Nevertheless, God allowed their country to be devastated, turned it into a place for jackals and engulfed them in the pitch-black shadow of death.

2. **They did not worship idols:** "If we had forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a foreign god, would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart"(verses 20,21). Stretching the hands out was a sign of prayer and expectation of help. It has never happened that the people forgot their God, at that time of defeat, and turned to idols. Had they done so, the Lord would have known about it. Job said that He knows the thoughts and intentions of the heart: "Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?" (Job 31:4).
3. **They suffered for God's sake:** "Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"(verse 22). God's people had not broken faith with the Lord; they rather suffered for His names sake and stayed faithful to Him. Paul quoted this verse in Romans 8:36 trying to encourage believers to bear persecution for Christ's sake even unto death. However, he adds that in being killed and slaughtered we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Just as the Old Testament people endured all troubles on account of belonging to God, the New Testament people should do likewise. They should not consider suffering as unusual, but rather expected! "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).

There are two remarkable things about the announcement of innocence:

1. The psalmist talks about innocence from major sins, in spite of many minor sins in him and his people. We so need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise our sins and repent of them, so that we would not be righteous in our own eyes.
2. This is a didactic, historical psalm. God walked with the fathers and grandfathers in spite of their weaknesses and shortcomings, and He must walk with the children and grandchildren in the same faithfulness.

### 3.5. Fifth: A Prayer

#### (verses 23-26)

The psalmist concludes his psalm with a request for speedy divine help. This prayer involves two requests:

1. **A request for divine watchfulness:** "Awake, why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever. Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our body clings to the

ground"(verses 23-25). The psalmist knew that God, the watcher of Israel, does not slumber or sleep (Psalm 121:3,4). It was out of pain that he thought God was unmindful of him. Faith usually does not seek the visible, but the believer begins to search for the visible once he doubts and grows spiritually weak. He asks God, who never sleeps, to wake up, be alert and not sleep! "For the Lord will not cast off forever" (Lamentations 3:31). He requests God, who cast His people off and hid His face, to smile in favour on them, as Moses said, "The Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labour and our oppression" (Deuteronomy 26:6,7). The enemy knocked the people down and humbled them. They had no strength left in them and could not stand up any more. The soul and body of the people were cast down and fallen, therefore they asked God to pay attention to them.

2. **A request for help and redemption:** "Arise for our help and redeem us for Your mercies sake"(verse 26). The Lord had revealed Himself as "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6,7). So the psalmist asked Him to reveal Himself through action, through helping and redeeming His people. His people say when His mercy overtakes them, "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18,19).

Today we fully comprehend how God redeems. In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). Thus we become justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). The psalmist said in his psalm, "Redeem us!" We say according to the gospel, "We thank You for redeeming us!"

### 3.6. Questions

1. What did the Lord do in the past?
2. How did the Psalmist describe his Lord?

## 4. Psalm Forty-Five

### A Song of Love

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies." A Contemplation of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.

**1 My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.**

**2 You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever.**

**3 Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty.**

**4 And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.**

**5 Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You.**

**6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.**

**7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.**

**8 All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.**

**9 King's' daughters are among Your honourable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.**

**10 Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house;**

**11 So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him.**

**12 And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favour.**

**13 The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold.**

**14 She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colours; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You.**

**15 With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace.**

**16 Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, whom You shall make princes in all the earth.**

**17 I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.**

The title of this psalm is a song of love. Love is its theme. It talks about the marriage of the king with the king's daughter. Some said that it talks about Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; but the Holy Spirit would not inspire the author to sing about Solomon's union with a heathen princess, neither could the contents of the psalm apply to any Israelite king. The Church, in both the Old and New Testaments, had always used the psalm as a Messianic prophecy about the union of Christ the King and the Church, His bride redeemed with His blood. The author of Hebrews quoted verses 6 and 7 of this psalm in Hebrews 1:8,9, "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your



companions." It is obvious that the apostle quoted them from the Greek Septuagint, not straight from the Hebrew. The wording varies but the meaning remains the same.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Glorification of Christ, the fair King (verses 1,2)
- Second: Glorification of Christ, the victorious King (verses 3-9)
- Third: The relationship of the Church to her King (verses 10-17)

#### 4.1. First: Glorification of Christ, the Fair King

##### (verses 1,2)

##### 1. The way of glorification (verse 1):

1. **Cordial:** "My heart is overflowing with a good theme"(verse 1a). The psalmist felt so much love for Christ that he could not keep it to himself, and his heart just overflowed. Also the theme he talks about is very dear to him, and "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things" (Matthew 12:35).
2. **Creative:** "I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer"(verse 1b,c). The heart that loved God composed a poem on the love of the king. It was ready to glorify the king through words and writing. When the heart was filled with love, it, in turn, filled the tongue with beautiful words. Ezra the scribe had the title skilled scribe (Ezra 7:6), which is the same in Hebrew *sopher mahir*.

##### 2. The reasons for glorifying Him (verse 2):

1. **The beauty of His person:** "You are fairer than the sons of men"(verse 2a). The psalmist glorifies the fair and beautiful personality of the king. Christ is the fairest in His birth through the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary. He is the fairest in His growth in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52). He is the fairest in his holiness. He said to His enemies, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). Pilate said of Him, "I have found no fault in this Man" (Luke 23:14). He is the fairest in His influence on sinners to bring them to repentance, rather than being influenced by them and rejecting them. Even on the cross He was the fairest in His love as He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). He is the fairest in His resurrection, ascension and the expectation of His return. As the disciples gazed upon Him when He was ascending, the two angels said to them, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).
2. **The beauty of His teachings:** "Grace is poured upon Your lips"(verse 2b). The psalmist sings the praises of Christ's fair, unprecedented teachings: "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). His

audience were astounded at His authoritative teachings. He never refused a person who asked Him a question, nor did He snub anyone who came seeking an answer. He never changed an answer that He had given. The answers He gave to basic questions about religious life, such as obtaining forgiveness and answered prayer, were always clear, definite and certain. He never said, "Perhaps" but "Assuredly I say to you..." Christ did not offer law and decrees, because the law of Moses was still there. He rather touched the hearts and the attitudes. If you do not hate, you do not kill; and if you do not lust, you do not commit adultery, He taught. This is why all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth (Luke 4:22).

3. **God was pleased with Him:** "Therefore God has blessed You forever"(verse 2c). Christ said to the Father, "I have come ... to do Your will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). The Fathers only response was, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

## 4.2. Second: Glorification of Christ, the Victorious King

### (verses 3-9)

It is unfortunate that such a fair king has enemies. In His majesty, He has to break through their ranks and fell them at His feet. The prince of this age has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine on them (2 Corinthians 4:4). Our fair Master has enemies. The psalmist calls upon Him to fight them, and fight He must in order to defend His bride, which is the Church. How many are His enemies, whom He defeats by turning them into lovers! He destroys their disobedience by His grace to obey the call of His love. How many are His enemies, even within the hearts of those who believe in Him! Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh can not please God (Romans 8:7,8). It is the power of Christ within them that makes them shout, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

#### 1. The King's weapon (verses 3,4):

1. **His sword:** "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One"(verse 3a). He was seen in the Book of Revelations as a fighter and "out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations ... And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelations 19:15,16). His sword that goes out of His mouth is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17). "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). His precious sword wakes up the consciences of men and convicts them of their sins.
2. **His glory:** "Gird ... Your glory and Your majesty, and in Your majesty ride"(verse

- 3b,4a). His glory is eternal; He had it before the creation of the universe (John 17:5). His glory touches people here and now, through His daily, frequent miracles; as well as in heaven, either through His intercession or judgement. He was born in a stable, having assumed the form a servant, and captivated our heart through the glory of His love. He will come again with the clouds, and every eye and those who pierced Him will see Him (Revelations 1:7).
3. **His character:** "Because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach you awesome things"(verse 4b). Christ gains victory through truth, which stands against lying, for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). He gains victory through humility, which stands against human pride; for He is gentle and humble of heart. He gains victory through righteousness, which stands against sin, for He is the Righteous One who makes many righteous. Because of such a character His enemies' hearts fail them (Luke 21:26).
  2. **The King's victory:** "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the people fall under You"(verse 5). The king must gain victory through His sword, glory and great character. His sharp arrow must hit the hearts of His enemies and fell them. "With righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist" (Isaiah 11:4,5).
  3. **The kingdom of the King (verses 6-9):**

Christ the King has enemies, whom He must defeat. For He shall reign! These verses describe the majesty of His reign.

    1. **His reign is everlasting:** "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever"(verse 6a). He is ever-existing and always stable: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end ... from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7). His throne is unlike the thrones of the earth, which always come to an end. Had the earthly thrones lasted for the ancestors, they would not have come to their descendants!
    2. **His reign is righteous:** "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom"(verse 6b). A sceptre of righteousness is a sceptre of equity and integrity. "God is light, and there is no darkness in Him" (1 John 1:5). God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone (James 1:13).
    3. **His reign is gladdening:** "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions"(verse 7). Because of His upright reign, love of righteousness and hate of wickedness, God anointed Him with the anointing of joy and favour. This anointing is different from anointing the king; it refers to joy and gladness. It is the oil of joy (Isaiah 61:3). People also anointed their dear guest as a welcome sign (Psalm 23:5).

Oil was also used on happy occasions as a sign of rejoicing. The psalmist said, "I have been anointed with fresh oil" (Psalm 92:10) because he was joyful and confident. A hurried reader might find verses 6 and 7 contradictory. Verse 6 says, "Your throne, O God," whereas verse 7 says, "Your God, has anointed You." This paradox is cleared away once we know that God the Father was talking with God the Son, The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Psalm 110:1). Your throne, O God, is forever and ever portrays Christ before His incarnation and after His ascension to His glory. The statement "God, Your God, has anointed You" portrays Christ at the time of His humility and condescension, when He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7).

Christ is marvellous and peerless; He is the only Son of God. He said to His own disciples, "I am ascending to My Father and you Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17), rather than, "I am ascending to our Father and God." His relationship to the Father differs from the disciples relationship to the Father. He is the Only Son of God; His eternal divinity and original Sonship are not acquired.

4. **His reign is rich:** "All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad. King's daughters are among Your honourable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir"(verses 8,9). Costly imported perfumes have been sprinkled over the king's garments. Myrrh came from the Arabian Peninsula, aloe was taken from a tree that grew in India and Malaya and cassia is a bark of an aromatic, evergreen tree that grew in India. Inlaid with ivory, the king's palace rang out with music coming from stringed instruments. The daughters of the kings of the nations serve Him. The children of this world have served the Church and its Master down the ages. Artists painted Him pictures, poets composed poems that sang His praises and the greatest musicians composed symphonies and operas that glorified Him. The visual and auditory media convey His message, and science and technology offer their service to His heavenly priesthood. The Church, His bride, is made to stand at the right hand of His throne, adorned with the gold of Ophir, which is the best and rarest sort of gold. Is there a more wonderful adornment than the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control? Does the Church take credit for all that fruit? No! She was made to stand. It is God who makes the Church stand at the right hand of its Master and Bridegroom, Christ. It is God who enriches her and makes her enjoy His great blessings. Unfortunately, we often see that she has forgotten her first love and lazily placed the lamp of the gospel under the bed or stowed it away under a basket (Matthew 5:15). But the king wakes her up and cleanses her to bring the splendour of her glory back to her.

### 4.3. Third: The Relationship of the Church to Her King

#### (verses 10-17)

Addressing the king's bride, the psalmist advises her to forget about her old house and give herself up to the king, because all majesty and glory await her with Him. After that he gives a description of the bride in the greatness of her new status. At the conclusion of the psalm, he describes the reaction of the Church.

1. **A relation of dedication:** "Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your fathers house"(verse 10). The psalmist demands the bride to forget her past life and listen to the instructions of her royal king to gain happiness and favour. Likewise, the Church ought to obey Christ and submit its will to His own. Every member of the Church must give Him first priority in their lives, because He said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me ... And he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:37-39).
2. **A relation of assurance (verses 11-16):**
  1. **Because the King takes pleasure in her:** "So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him"(verse 11). Christ takes pleasure in the Church and confers upon her His perfect attributes when she submits to Him. This makes her even more beautiful than ever! "God will beautify the humble with salvation" (Psalm 149:4). The Church should be adorned with the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4).
  2. **Because the nations serve her:** "And the daughter of Tyre will be there with a gift; the rich among the people will seek Your favour"(verse 12). Tyre was an opulent Phoenician port and a great commercial and industrial centre. The psalmist says that the daughters of Tyre will seek the favour of the bride with a gift, just to see her smiling at them. The Lord is pleased when the Church of Christ discharges her responsibilities toward society, and He makes her enemies at peace with her (Proverbs 16:7). He even uses her enemies to serve her. Our good God calls us to obedience, which gives us assurance and places all His resources at our disposal.
  3. **Because of the wedding procession:** "The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colours; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace"(verses 13-15). The bride was taken to the women's quarters in a glorious procession, in anticipation of meeting the King. She had put on her best clothing, her maids of honour gathered around her, cheerful music was played and moving voices rang out with singing in preparation for appearing in the royal presence. Finally the

joyful procession arrives at the royal palace. This description is reminiscent of the parable of the wise virgins. Let us be prepared for the happy wedding day, so that the door should not be shut and keep us out. Let us be partakers of the divine glory, among the guests of the royal celebration that Christ wants for us, for believers will be united with Him. Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife (the Church) has made herself ready. "And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelations 19:7,8).

4. **Because of divine recompense:** "Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, whom You shall make princes in all the earth"(verse 16). The bride leaves her parents house only to find that God has recompensed her with her saved sons. Leaving her parents house to go to her husband Isaac's house, Rebecca's brothers said to her, "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them" (Genesis 24:60). Likewise, the Lord promises the Church many spiritual sons who will become princes in all the earth, for the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). The Lord shall come and judge the world, together with His saints (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Talking to Christ, Peter said, "We have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?" Jesus answered him, "When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my names sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:27-29).

3. **A relation of a covenant:** "I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever"(verse 17). The heart of the bride is filled with love for the Groom, and she always remembers His name. When the people will see the Church's love for and loyalty to Christ, and hear her sing His praises, they also will join in praising Him forever and ever.

Christ has loved the Church and given Himself up for her "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26,27). The Church will always sing Christ's love for her and His exaltation of her. In doing so Christ will see His seed from her, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand (Isaiah 53:10).

#### 4.4. Questions

1. Why did the psalmist glorify the Messiah?
2. Why is the church confident?

## **5. Psalm Fourty-Six**

### **God is Refuge and Strength**

**To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song for Alamoth.**

**1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

**2 Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**

**3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah**

**4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.**

**5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.**

**6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.**

**7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah**

**8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, who has made desolations in the earth.**

**9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.**

**10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!**

**11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah**

The three psalms 46-48 make up a trilogy of praise. They are dedicated to the Lord for Jerusalem's deliverance from her enemies. Psalm 46 declares the presence of the King in the midst of His city to give assurance and peace. Psalm 47 declares God's reign over all the earth, which can be seen clearly through the defeat of His enemies. Psalm 48 declares Jerusalem's safety, because God is present among His people.

It was Jerusalem's deliverance from the attack of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, under King Hezekiah (701 B. C.) that occasioned writing these three psalms (2 King's 18,19; Isaiah 36,37). King Hezekiah of Judah was enslaved to him at the time, but refused to pay tribute to him (most probably under the instigation of the king of Babylon). Sennacherib attacked and defeated Hezekiah, who was obliged to pay 300 shekels of silver and 30 shekels of gold as penalty. He even had to scrape off the gold that covered the gates of the temple and give it to Sennacherib. Later Sennacherib headed south toward Egypt to wage war against it. Suddenly, and for an unknown reason, he decided not to leave Jerusalem in the hands of Hezekiah. Perhaps he did not trust Hezekiah after the latter had brought water into Jerusalem from Gihon spring by means of a subterranean tunnel (2 King's 20:20). Sennacherib sent a

detachment of his army under Rabshakeh and two other leaders to besiege Jerusalem. When he called for the king, three representatives of the king came out to answer him. He ridiculed King Hezekiah and said in the Hebrew tongue that Hezekiah's dependence on Egypt was like depending on a sharp stick that pierces the hand of whoever leans on it. He claimed that confidence in YHWH is useless, because YHWH will not save those who worship Him, just as the gods of the nations around them could not help their people. Sennacherib destroyed their cities and dashed their gods to pieces. Judah's God will not be any better than those gods!

All Rabshakeh wanted was to stir the people against Hezekiah, but they did not respond to him. So he sent him messages ridiculing him and his God. Hezekiah took these messages to the house of the Lord and prayed, "O Lord of hosts, ... save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord, You alone" (Isaiah 37:16-20). God sent him the prophet Isaiah to reassure him of the coming victory, and to tell him that He will defend him and defeat the pride of Sennacherib. And so it was! The angel of the Lord struck 185 thousand soldiers of the Assyrian army. The Old Testament does not tell how all those soldiers died in one night, but Herodotus said that a huge army of rats crept up on the Assyrian army by night and gnawed at their arrows and bows. They were left without a weapon to fight with or even to defend themselves. When he saw what happened to his army, Sennacherib gathered the rest of his army and returned home. As he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, two of his sons killed him and fled. His third son Esarhaddon reigned in his place.

On the occasion of this deliverance this trilogy of praise was written (Psalm 46-48). Psalm 46 consists of three stanzas speaking about God's power. The first one says that God's power grants His people assurance, therefore they say, We will not fear (verse 2). The second stanza says that God's power gladdens His people: "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God" (verse 4). The third stanza says that God's power silences His enemies and commands them to "Be still, and know that I am God" (verse 10). Both the second and the third stanzas end with the statement: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (verses 7,11).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: God's power assures His people (verses 1-3)
- Second: God's power gladdens His people (4-7)
- Third: God's power silences His enemies (8-11)

### **5.1. First: God's Power Assures His People (verses 1-3)**



"God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling"(verses 1-3). These verses make clear that God's protection of His people gives them assurance and peace, no matter how the firm things shook! The roaring Assyrian army attacked the peaceful city, and the hearts of its inhabitants were filled with terror. The earth shook and trembled under the hooves of the horses and the clamour of the soldiers. The enemy threw the scales out of balance. It seemed that he shook the earth and sent the mountains tumbling down into the heart of the seas, causing them to scream and raise their voice, so as to scare the peaceful people.

Yet the voice of faith also rose to declare that the Lord is refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. This filled the fearful hearts with peace! Make the Lord your lot, and yourself His, then He will be your refuge. You will declare out of experience, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9). In the midst of their fears believers call out: "O Lord, be gracious to us; we have waited for You ... Be ... our salvation also in the time of trouble" (Isaiah 33:2). The Lord answers, "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you" (Isaiah 54:10). Thus God's precious statement is fulfilled: "The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; but God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like the chaff of the mountain before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Then behold, at eventide, trouble!" (Isaiah 17:13,14). When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19). ">No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgement you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17). Everything around may threaten us, but we must feel secure and not afraid, because the Lord's presence provides us with protection. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Christ emphasised that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). They are poor who hoard treasures on earth, for it will shake. The day will come when the earth will burn up and all the works in it (2 Peter 3:10). Happy are those who store up treasures in heaven. Oh, how desperately we need families that gather together for prayer in Christ's name, and are united in the face of the hard circumstances, no matter how hard they are! And how much do we need churches that are united in prayer, able to face persecutions, no matter how intense they may be.

God is our refuge and strength; He helps us when the enemy attacks us. He is the ark of our deliverance, our city of refuge, the One who redresses the wrongs done against us and invests us with inner strength to face the difficulties of life. Therefore we declare: "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Again He is our refuge and strength

when our sins weigh us down with guilt feelings. We rush to Him to confess, so that He will forgive and cleanse us from all sin. He is our refuge and strength when we grow weak, and hear Him say, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

## **5.2. Second: God's Power Gladdens His People**

### **(verses 4-7)**

In these verses the psalmist describes God as the Most High, the master of supreme authority in His created universe. No earthly king rules except by His permission. No doubt that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). But against what we would expect, this divine authority does not stop the enemies from attacking God's community; for there are two kingdoms in our world: the kingdom of Satan, and the kingdom of God. There is a continual war going on between the armies of evil and the army of righteousness. The kingdom of Satan roars with empty shouts against the kingdom of God, but the final victory belongs to the power of good. God allows an opposition party on Earth, but Christ went out conquering and to conquer. He assured His followers, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

God gives victory to His people through the following:

1. **God waters His people:** "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High"(verse 4). True, the salty, roaring and swelling waters of the seas surround the believer, but there is a river of fresh water that springs to fill the thirsty soul and the parched land. It makes the desert of the believer bloom into a garden, for His Lord brings him to still waters, free from turbulent waves. He drinks in peace and safety (Psalm 23:2). Describing the waters of Shiloh, the prophet Isaiah said that they flow softly (Isaiah 8:6). They run quietly without waves to disturb the quiet of those who drink. Shiloh is the city in which the ark remained from the days of Joshua till the days of the prophet Samuel. It was the worship centre of the children of Israel. The Lord pours waters on the believers from a river whose streams make their souls and city glad.

King Hezekiah made the water to run into a subterranean tunnel and let the inhabitants of Jerusalem drink during the siege (2 Chronicles 32:30). The fresh water brought joy to them. Spiritually speaking, God gives living water to His people, which is the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). Christ declared, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:14). In his vision John saw a new heaven and a new earth that had neither roaring sea nor brackish water. He only saw a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb

(Revelations 22:1).

2. **God lives among His people:** "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn"(verse 5). The presence of the Most High God in the midst of His people fills their hearts with joy despite the harshness of the circumstances. They derive their joy from His presence with them and the grace He grants them. This makes them exclaim, "Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us" (Micah 3:11).

Christ was asleep on board a boat when He and His disciples were crossing the lake of Tiberias. All of a sudden the waves raged and began to beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. Shouting, the disciples woke Christ up and said, "Do You not care that we are perishing?" He rose up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and a great quiet reigned. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:35-41). Would a boat sink with Christ on board? God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn, at the darkest hour of the night. She will have another Exodus experience: "So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:27). It is the same thing that happened to the Assyrian army all over again: "when the people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses-all dead" (Isaiah 37:36). When life presses hard on us and we lose all hope of deliverance, God helps us just at the break of dawn. "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

3. **God encourages His people:** "The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted"(verse 6). What God says happens, and what He commands comes into being! "The Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger and the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest and hailstone. For through the voice of the Lord Assyria will be beaten down" (Isaiah 30:30,31). The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters" (Exodus 15:9,10). "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

The second stanza of this psalm ends with a refrain that repeats itself at the end of the psalm. It says, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (verse 7,11). It was about Him that David said to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts" (1 Samuel 17:45). His armies (hosts) are all creation (Genesis 2:1). They are His chosen people (Exodus 7:4). They are the sun, the moon and the stars (Deuteronomy 4:19;17:3). They are the angels (Luke 2:13). He is the Lord of glory, the master of all authority in heaven and on earth. Even the hosts of evil

are His, in a sense; for they accomplish His divine purposes against their will.

"The Lord of hosts is with us because He is Immanuel, which is translated God with us"(Matthew 1:23). He is the God of Jacob, He is the God of the Old Testament, who had favour upon Jacob, the head of the tribes. He entered into a covenant with him while he was running away from his brother Esau and travelling to his uncle Laban. He also promised to be with him, keep him and bring him back to his own land (Genesis 28:10-21). Although Jacob made mistakes and cheated many times, the Lord did not reject him; He even renewed the old promise for him (Genesis 32:22-29). The covenant was not dependent on Jacobs goodness, rather on God's faithfulness to His word.

This is the God of Jacob, our refuge, who came down and entered into a covenant with us that we did not even dream of.

### **5.3. Third: God's Power Silences His Enemies**

#### **(verses 8-11)**

- 1. God subdues His enemies:** "Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire"(verses 8,9). This is an invitation to learn a lesson from the works of God, who subdues His enemies. His works echo the divine command: "Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge My might" (Isaiah 33:13). The Lord defeated Sennacherib's army in an unexpected manner. The biblical historian recorded that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185 thousand; "and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses- all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away" (Isaiah 37:36,37). Reflect on how the Lord subdues His enemies! Such a wise reflection calls the soul that is far from the Lord to return to him in repentance, surrender ones life to Him and submit to Him unreservedly. Say to God, "How awesome are Your works!" (Psalm 66:3). What happened to the Assyrian army is a foretaste of what will happen in the future. The Bible says, "Now it will come to pass in latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.'" "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people; they will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-5).
- 2. God stops the opposition of His enemies:** "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"(verse 10). The enemy may be

defeated, but the bitterness of defeat increases his hatred. The Lord tells His defeated enemies to stop their antagonism toward His people and commands them to recognise Him as Lord and Master. The psalmist also calls them: "Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be warned, be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:10,11). All the nations must submit to the Lord, and every knee shall bow "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day it shall be- The Lord is one, and His name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

The third stanza of this psalm ends with the same refrain as in the second stanza, which says, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (verse 11). Let all believers shout for the heavenly victory they have. It is true that the soldiers of the enemy may come back to besiege them, but the Lord of hosts is with them. He is in front of them and behind them; above them and all around them. He is their refuge just as He was Jacobs. When He does with them what He did with him, they will shout, "We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners!" (Psalm 20:5).

#### 5.4. Questions

1. 1 - Mention three things the psalmist said God does for His people.
2. 2 - How does God deal with the enemy of His people?

### 6. Psalm Forty-Seven

#### God Has Gone up with Shouting

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

**1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!**

**2 For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.**

**3 He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet.**

**4 He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah**

**5 God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.**

**6 Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

**7 For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding.**

**8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.**

**9 The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.**

Psalms 46-48 make up a trilogy of praise. They are dedicated to the Lord for Jerusalem's

deliverance from King Sennacherib of Assyria (cf. the introduction of Psalm 46). God said, "Be still, and know that I am God ... I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10). The prophet Isaiah also said, "The Lord of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion" (Isaiah 31:4). Now He has come down and delivered His people, then ascended. Our psalm emphasises this fact in verse 5: "God has gone up with a shout." The Church has considered this verse a prophecy of Christ's ascension, which took place after He had come down to the earth, was crucified for us and rose from the dead. He defeated the enemy and went up to His eternal glory. This psalm was read during the celebration of Christ's ascension.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Praising the Lord who chose the Children of Israel (verses 1-4)
- Second: Praising the Lord who revealed His power (verses 5-7)
- Third: Praising the Lord who subdued His enemies (verses 8,9)

## 6.1. First: Praising the Lord who Chose the Children of Israel

### (verses 1-4)

#### 1. The manner of praise:

1. **With clapping:** "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!"(verse 1a). When the king was installed into office, the people used to clap their hands. This happened, for example, with Joash son of Ahaziah, as the chronicler says: "And he [Jehoiada the high priest] brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the Testimony [the Book of the Law]; they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, 'Long live the king'" (2 King's 11:12). Moses also said, "Rejoice, Gentiles, with His people!" (Deuteronomy 32:43). The invitation is extended to all nations to clap their hands and declare that the Lord is God, the King seated on His throne.
2. **With shouting:** "Shout to God with the voice of triumph"(verse 1b). Shouting is the sound that issues from the hearts first, before it issues from the throats, when greeting the king. This is what happened with King Saul as Samuel said to all the people, Do you see him whom the Lord has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people? All the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!" (1 Samuel 10:24).

Let us shout with the voice of triumph and say, "Long live the triumphant King, who went out conquering and to conquer! He can never be defeated."

#### 2. The cause of praise:

1. **Because He is the King of all the earth:** "For the Lord Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth"(verse 2). He is above all the idols, gods or deities that sinful men take for themselves. "Who is like Him--majestic in holiness, awesome in

glory, working wonders" (Exodus 15:11)? Christ said, "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31). Christ is above all, because He came into our world through the immaculate conception from the Holy Spirit. We cannot compare Him to anyone else, either in holiness and loftiness of teaching, in working miracles or in the fact that He is coming back to the Earth as judge of the living and the dead. Sennacherib was described as the great king (Isaiah 36:4), but his ephemeral greatness is nothing compared with the greatness of the Lord, the King of all the earth. Sennacherib was routed, ran away and returned home, where his life ended at the hands of his own sons!

2. **Because He subdues His enemies:** "He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet"(verse 3). He will entirely subdue them with His word and authority. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10,11). Of course, the arch-enemy of the believer is the evil one, but "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:4,5).
3. **Because He chooses our inheritance:** "He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves"(verse 4). God chose Jacob because He loved Jacob, not because Jacob deserved it. He gave him the promise of the land, which He fulfilled for his descendants. Later Moses said to them, "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. God divided the nations of the earth as He was thinking of the body of believers! As He set the boundaries for the dwelling places of the heathen He stated that the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:8-10).

God always chooses excellency for us. Some may grumble when God divides the portions among us, but after a while, when they look back at their past lives, they discover the excellency of God's choice for them. Then they ask forgiveness for their grumbling and thank him for what He chose. Let us thank Him and praise Him because He always chooses what is best and most suitable for us.

## **6.2. Second: Praising the Lord who Revealed His Power (verses 5-7)**

1. **He revealed His power through shouting:** "God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!"(verses 5,6). God has come down to deliver His people, and has gone up with a shout of triumph. Such an expression depicts God in human terms. It is like saying, "The hand of God", for example. This expression means that God takes so much care of His people that He has come down from His heaven to their earth to deliver them and comfort them. A good example of this is what God said to Moses: "I am the God of your father- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face for fear of looking upon the Lord. The Lord continued, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:6-8). When He has accomplished what He came for (has come down for), God went up with a shout and the sound of a trumpet; those musical instruments which His people play to express their gratitude for His majesty. The Israelites also used to bring up the ark of the Lord (the symbol of His presence among His people) with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet (2 Samuel 6:15).

Thanks to the Gospel, today we praise Christ who came down into the lower parts of the earth to deliver us, who were lost sinners, and complete our salvation. Then He rose, conquering death, and went up to His glory. And "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now this, He ascended- what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?)" (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8-10).

The Children of Israel shouted, "Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!" because He had delivered them from Pharaoh and Sennacherib, but we have much more reason to thank God. We thank Him for His love for us, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). Our God does not look down on us, but comes down to us to save us. He fills our hearts with joy and rejoicing because He delivers us from the shame, authority and punishment of our sin. As a Good Shepherd who takes care of our present life and accompanies us in every step we take, He walks with us through our lives journey and plans our future.

2. **He revealed His power through reigning over all the earth:** "For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding"(verse 7). God is the King because He is the Creator and the Ruler. Let us compose an eloquent poem for Him to express our thankfulness and appreciation. Let us acknowledge our indebtedness; He is the first one to deserve thanksgiving and praise: "I recite my composition concerning the King" (Psalm 45:1). "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).



What a great host of people who experience God's divine providence and see His authority exercised on earth! He hears their prayers, delivers them from their distresses and grants them success, health, children and finances. They do well, for He hears prayer and to Him all flesh will come (Psalm 65:2). But they are few who experience that His authority in heaven delivers them from their sins and transports them to liberty in Christ. This would be the best thing they could do for their present and future life. He says, "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). I call upon you, dear reader, to sing a poem of thanksgiving to the God of providence and a poem of thanksgiving to the God of salvation. Say to Him, "Bless the Lord, O my soul ... who forgives all your iniquities ... who redeems your life from destruction" (Psalm 103:1-5).

### **6.3. Third: Praising the Lord who Subdued His Enemies**

#### **(verses 8,9)**

1. **He subdued the nations:** "God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne"(verse 8). He is the King and every day He offers a fresh evidence of His complete, sovereign authority over all. He is seated upon His holy throne. "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). The Lord rules over the mighty angels; they carry out His orders. He rules over all His hosts who serve and do His pleasure. He rules also over all His works in all places of His dominion (Psalm 103:20-22). It is for this reason that the angel shouted at the seventh trumpet: "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever! And the twenty-four elders, who sat before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great" (Revelations 11:15-18).

God has subdued the nations and reigned over them. He sits just as Christ sat at the right hand of the majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3) after having finished His redemptive work, risen from the dead and gone up to heaven. He has come down to our earth and completed the work of salvation, then returned to the glory whence He came. He announced, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

2. **He subdued the princes:** "The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham"(verse 9a). Here is fulfilled what the psalmist said at the onset of the psalm: all the nations clapping their hands and shouting to God with the voice of triumph. The people of the God of Abraham may have two meanings: The princes of the

nations who represent their kingdoms came to Him and became the people of the God of Abraham; hence God says, "Blessed is Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance" (Isaiah 19:25). He has shown His authority to all, and everyone worshipped Him. Or, it could mean that the princes of the nations gathered together with the people of the God of Abraham to worship God, because they recognised that He was the only true King.

3. **All are under His protection:** "For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted"(verse 9b). A shield is a big buckler. It is a piece of wood covered with leather, with which a soldier protects himself from arrows. The verse means that the Lord protects all the earth. Because He is greatly exalted, He can see all and protect all. People used to call the prince or the king the Shield, because He protected his people. God protects us because He is the great King. Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem with his mighty army, ridiculed her God and threatened her. But the greatly exalted God was a shield and buckler. He protected His people and scattered His enemies. Let us sing this song of salvation: "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph For our shield belongs to the Lord, and our king to the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 89:18).

#### 6.4. Questions

1. How does God show His power?
2. Explain Psalm 47:5.

#### 7. Psalm Forty-Eight

##### As We Have Heard, so We Have Seen

A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain.

2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

3 God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge.

4 For behold, the kings assembled, they passed by together.

5 They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, they hastened away.

6 Fear took hold of them there, and pain, as of a woman in birth pangs,

7 As when You break the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

8 As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah

**9 We have thought, O God, on Your loving-kindness, in the midst of Your temple.**

**10 According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.**

**11 Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgments.**

**12 Walk about Zion, and go all around her. Count her towers;**

**13 Mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following.**

**14 For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death.**

Psalms 46-48 make up a trilogy of praise. They are dedicated to the Lord for Jerusalem's deliverance from King Sennacherib of Assyria (cf. the introduction of Psalm 46). This psalm speaks of God's greatness and the glory of His Church.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The glory of the Church (verses 1-8)
- Second: The preaching of the Church (verses 9-11)
- Third: The duty of the people toward the Church (verses 12-14)

## 7.1. First: The Glory of the Church

### (verses 1-8)

1. **Her glory is in her belonging:** "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain"(verse 1). The Church is the city of our God, His holy mountain and "The city of the great King" (verse 2; Matthew 5:35). The Church is also the city of the Lord of hosts (verse 8), about which he said, "This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it" (Psalm 132:14). As a result of this belonging she worships, praises and thanks her great God who showed His greatness when He delivered her. He always shows His greatness in His holy temple, where sacrifices of thanksgiving are offered Him, and people gather in His name to worship Him and enjoy the glory of His holy presence among them. He promised: "Where two of three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). "You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast ... He is your praise and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen" (Deuteronomy 10:20,21).
2. **Her glory is in her elevation:** "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King"(verse 2). The temple was erected on the elevated Mount of Zion, in the elevated city of Jerusalem. It was seen from every place, shining to all. The psalmist not only means physical elevation, but also the

spiritual one. For the law of God rises above all! Perhaps Christ was thinking of Jerusalem as He said, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Let the light of the believers shine on all those around them, so that they become the source of joy for the sides of the north, to all the ends of the earth. Let us be like mountains in our spiritual stature, and persevere to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13), because the principles of the kingdom of heaven govern our daily conduct. Let us conduct ourselves as the Lord's holy temple, that reveals the glory of His holiness to everyone who sees us. Then the promise will be fulfilled for us: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1).

- 3. Her glory is in her victory:** "God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge. For behold, the kings assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, they hastened away. Fear took hold of them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail, as when You break the ships of Tarshish with an east wind"(verses 3-7). Despite the Church's glory, and because of her glory, enemies attack her from within and without. She might go through temptations from within through doubt, laziness and the love and imitation of the world. But the Holy Spirit wakes her up to shake off her doubts, laziness and weakness. She might also be attacked by enemies from without. But even if the enemies surround her, the Holy Spirit is in her palaces to guard her and destroy her enemy. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). Believers know these assuring facts from the Lord's revelation of Himself and from what many other believers experienced with Him. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and His own special people (1 Peter 2:9). When the Moabites and the Ammonites united to wage war against King Jehoshaphat, he found himself unable to fight them. So he prayed. Jahaziel, a prophet of the sons of Asaph, advised him to meet the enemy with singing and shouting: "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever." Once they began singing and praising, the enemies attacked each other and were scattered in dismay. God gave victory to His people (2 Chronicles 20). King Sennacherib said in his ignorance, "Do not let your God, in whom you trust, deceive you" (Isaiah 37:10). But Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah knew that God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge. God dealt with Sennacherib in His own way, causing him suddenly to flee in fear with his soldiers. This was the experience down the ages with everyone who attacked God's community, no matter how strong they were. And it still is the experience of today.

Believers conquer, not through their own strength, but with an east wind that breaks the ships of Tarshish. The ships of Tarshish (in the south-west of Spain) were famous for

their huge bodies and skilful seamen who were well acquainted with the sea (Isaiah 2:16). The east wind, however, is too strong for them to face; their ships break and they themselves cannot escape. The east wind is violent and destructive. In the Bible it represents divine judgement. He removes it by His rough wind in the day of the east wind (Isaiah 27:8). True, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

4. **Her glory is in her past and future:** "As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever"(verse 8). They have heard of God's works from their fathers. On every Passover the fathers would narrate to their children and grandchildren the miraculous story of the Exodus (Exodus 13:8-10). The divine way of dealing repeats itself: what happened in the past happens again in the present. The newer miracle is more readily believed than the older ones (see my comment on the Lord of hosts in Psalm 46:7).

## 7.2. Second: The Preaching of the Church

### (verses 9-11)

1. **The Church preaches in the house of the Lord:** "We have thought, O God, on Your loving-kindness, in the midst of Your temple"(verse 9). In God's temple spiritual things become clear to the hearers in a better way, as Asaph said, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end" (Psalm 73:17). "Holiness adorns the house of the Lord" (Psalm 93:5). There Isaiah saw the Lord's holiness, and a seraph touched his lips and removed his transgression and atoned for his sin (Isaiah 6:6,7). In the house of the Lord sin offerings were offered as recognition of the God of forgiveness, and peace offerings as thanksgiving to the God of giving. In the house of the Lord God's word is read as a lamp and light for the paths of the hearers (Luke 4:17). The Church that has enjoyed God's glories demonstrates His favour and spreads His truth in His house.
2. **The Church preaches to the world at large:** "According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth"(verse 10). The Church preaches in the Lord's house to those who attend it, but there are so many people that don't do so! So the Church goes to them wherever they may be, and proclaims to them God's love and faithfulness. She declares that "He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near" (Ephesians 2:17). She is like her Good Shepherd who went out searching for the one sheep that was lost to restore it (Luke 15:4). She calls out on His behalf, "Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done" (Isaiah 33:13). She teaches that God's name and glory fill heaven and earth. Although blind eyes do not perceive it and deaf ears do not hear it, the firmament, His word and the conduct of the believers declare it. The Church broadcasts God's praise to the ends of the earth, for the loving and beneficent God deserves such praise. She declares that His right hand is full of righteousness (that is justice) and His people shout for His justice, just as Miriam (Exodus 15), Deborah

(Judges 5), Hannah (1 Samuel 2), Elisabeth and the Virgin Mary (Luke 2) sang. They all shouted to let all the world hear the good news of His kindness, faithfulness, righteousness and justice. Let us acknowledge our God of salvation before all! Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he has had compassion on you (Mark 5:19). "For Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32,33).

3. **The Church preaches the message of joy:** "Let Mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgements"(verse 11). Mount Zion, the religious and political capital, rejoices in the judgements and law of the Lord. The little villages (i.e. the daughters of Judah) are glad because the just law of the Lord has dominated the land. This joy of the Lord becomes a source of strength for the believers (Nehemiah 8:10). It is because the Lord is the true and permanent source of joy that the sorrowful and the weary come to Him. One day we will certainly hear the shout: "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgements" (Revelations 19:1,2).

### **7.3. Third: The Duty of the People toward the Church**

#### **(verses 12-14)**

1. **To see how she is:** "Walk about Zion, and go all around her. Count her towers"(verse 12). The enemy has besieged Jerusalem, frightened her inhabitants and counted her towers of defence (Isaiah 33:18), but the Lord drove him away. The psalmist requires the believers to walk around the walls of their liberated city to see how she is and he thanks God who delivered her. This would come as a fulfilment of the prophets command: "Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that will not be taken down; not one of its stakes will ever be removed, nor will any of its cords be broken" (Isaiah 33:20). This is exactly what Nehemiah did after he had led his people in building and inaugurating the wall of Jerusalem. They all gathered around the city and formed two large choirs on top of the wall (Nehemiah 12:27-31).
2. **To think of her:** "Mark well her bulwarks"(verse 13a). Bulwarks are fortifications. The psalmist asks the believers to set their hearts on them and ponder them, giving thanks to God who protected them when the enemy tried to pull them down and attack the city. The people of the Lord say, "We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks" (Isaiah 26:1). It is painful indeed that some believers remember only the weaknesses of their church. Yet, we must never forget that God has made for His city bulwarks and fortifications, that He defends it and grants it victory. Let us keep in remembrance the Church's ministry to our society and appreciate our fellow believers, even if we differ with them, because they are the salt of the earth, the light of the world

and the leaven that makes the whole batch rise up. Let us live up to the level that God requires of us. Those who are far away from the Church would like to see the holiness in the believers that they cannot see in the world.

3. **To bear witness to her Master:** "Consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following"(verse 13b). After the believers have walked around the walls of the Church in gratitude to God who protects her and aids her, they tell the coming the generation of what happened with them and her. Every generation should speak of the great generation that preceded it, and every present generation should tell the coming one, so that we can glorify God together for His great work. Lets focus on the beauty of our Church, just as we did on her shortcomings. Then God will accept our thankfulness for the Church's beauty and complete her shortcomings through the work of the Holy Spirit, who will surely bring a spiritual revival in every one of us.
4. **To glory in her God:** "For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death"(verse 14). The people glory in their personal relationship with the Lord and in their great and deep experiences with Him. God's people have declared that they belong to Him, and that they have resolved to continue walking with Him. They declared that God is their God forever and ever and that they trust in His guidance and direction through His word, Spirit, providence and the spiritual leaders who handle the word of truth correctly (2 Timothy 2:15).

God's people acknowledge that they glory in Him even to death. This means that God will guide them until they reach their eternal home. He will guide them regardless of the dangers that surround them. He does not leave them even for a moment.

The prophet Isaiah and King Hezekiah saw the end of the siege and the enemy's defeat through the eyes of faith. They recognised that salvation will come. May our hearts fill with confidence and assurance, knowing that our God is known as the refuge, that He manages our affairs and blesses our lives no matter how dangerous the situation.

## 7.4. Questions

1. Why is the church glorious?
2. Where does the church witness to God?

## 8. Psalm Forty-Nine

### Advice to Foolish Rich Folk

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

**1 Hear this, all peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world,**

**2 Both low and high, rich and poor together.**

- 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall give understanding.**
- 4 I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on the harp.**
- 5 Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?**
- 6 Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches,**
- 7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him --**
- 8 For the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever --**
- 9 That he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit.**
- 10 For he sees wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others.**
- 11 Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.**
- 12 Nevertheless man, though in honour, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.**
- 13 This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah**
- 14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling.**
- 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me. Selah**
- 16 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased;**
- 17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.**
- 18 Though while he lives he blesses himself (for men will praise you when you do well for yourself),**
- 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.**
- 20 A man who is in honour, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish.**

This is a didactic, hortative psalm, dealing with a topic that concerns all people: riches. Money has a great influence on the minds of most people; poor folk dread it because they it makes them feel inadequate, and the rich folk gloat over it since they have it. However, God says to the have-nots, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather in barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26). And to the well-to-do He says, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he has possessed" (Luke 12:15). The wise psalmist explains to us the limits of the power of money; it cannot prevent death and the one in possession of it will have to leave it behind once He is beyond the veil!

He also teaches us that the upright have dominion (verse 14) and that God will redeem their



souls from the power of the grave (verse 15). This psalm reminds us of two parables that Jesus taught. One of them was about a rich, foolish man who thought that his life consisted in his possessions. This man died on the very night he thought this, and left all his treasures behind (Luke 12:16-21). The other parable relates of a rich man who paid no attention to a poor man who was cast down at his door. This rich mans life ended in hellfire and torment (Luke 16:19-31).

This, however, does not imply that all rich people are foolish, nor that all the poor are wise. There are wise rich folk who honour the Lord with their possessions, like Job and Abraham for example, as well as foolish poor folk who stay away from God. Wealth in itself is neither good nor bad; it is the way man uses wealth that matters. Wealth is a hard master, but also a helpful servant. If we make it master over our lives it turns into an idol, but if we use it well it becomes a helpful servant for us, our families and neighbours.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The wise preacher (verses 1-4)
- Second: The foolish rich folk (verses 5-15)
- Third: The believers attitude to the foolish rich folk (verses 16-20)

## **8.1. First: The Wise Preacher**

### **(verses 1-4)**

The psalmist found out something which he wanted to tell all people about: The evaluation of riches, wealth and honour. We discern the following characteristics in this wise preacher:

1. **He is a preacher to all people:** "Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all you inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together"(verses 1,2). The topic that the psalmist speaks of concerns all people: What God thinks of wealth regarding the inhabitants of this lower, short and transitory world. "He who has ears, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:9). In relation to money, people are low and high, rich and poor. Regardless of their economical situation, people need to know the divine principles to evaluate wealth and riches in a proper way. The rich should not set their hearts on it, and the poor should learn to be content with what they have and thank God for the treasures of health, wisdom, family and grace they have, which no money can buy. They should all realise that "Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife" (Proverbs 17:1). This is a warning for the rich and an encouragement for the poor.
2. **He preaches after meditation and thinking:** "My mouth shall speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart shall bring understanding"(verse 3). He has received wisdom from God, therefore everything he says, repeats and meditates on is the essence of wisdom and understanding. He asked for God's guidance and decided to offer the wisdom which he

had learned from God to everybody. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2) and "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver" (Proverbs 3:13,14). Wisdom in the Old Testament sense of the word not only means understanding, but also its application in life. There is a difference between understanding and wisdom. Understanding consists in information that fills the mind, but wisdom is a daily conduct that applies the mind of God to real life.

- 3. He tackles difficult subjects:** "I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will disclose my dark saying on a harp"(verse 4). After long years of experience and knowledge the psalmist found out an important fact. He cast it in the form of a proverb for the people, because a proverb presents what a person knows in a rhymed, brief phrase that is easy to memorise. The psalmist felt that this fact was a puzzling mystery for many, so he wanted to represent it by means of singing and music to make it easy for the people to memorise it. He used the different talents God gave him, such as divine revelation, poetical prowess and musical skill for setting these psalms to music.

We learn from these feelings of the psalmist that, when God highlights an idea or an experience to us, we must share it with other people. Paul said to the pastors of the church of Ephesus, "I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus ... For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:20,21,27). He also said to the Colossians about the Gospel, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

## 8.2. Second: The Foolish Rich Folk

### (verses 5-15)

- 1. They are foolish in their attitude to possessions:** "Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me? Those who trust in their wealth and boast of their riches"(verses 5,6). The psalmist declares that there is no need for him to fear the unjust, rich people who pursue the poor and take advantage of them. Unmindful of God's commandments they do their best trying to get money, and in so doing commit two sins: They trust in wealth, even though it does not prevent anyone from dying. They boasted in it, although one should boast only in God, the source of wealth, and Christ the Redeemer. Their proper attitude should have been: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14 NIV). Consequently, there is no use fearing those foolish rich ones, because sinners must pay for their sins whether sooner or later. God says to the believers, "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the sons of man who will be made like grass?" (Isaiah 51:12).

2. **They are foolish in their attitude to death:** "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him- for the redemption of their soul is costly, and it shall cease forever- that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit. For he sees that wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others"(verses 7-10). The foolish rich people made wealth their god and boasted in it as though it would redeem them from death and the grave, or rescue them from the wages of sin, which is spiritual death ensuing from separation from God! In their ignorance they thought that their wealth could protect them from dangers and difficulties, and they put their trust in it, as if it could buy them anything, including eternal life! Every idol-worshiper, be that idol a statue, money, family, knowledge or a social relationship, is dead in his transgressions and sins, because he is separated from the living God, the source of eternal life. "What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). No man can redeem himself, or even his brother, from death. All the money he has cannot buy him out of it, neither can he offer God a ransom to atone for his own sins or those of his brother. The ransom required is so much that no man can afford it, even if he continues working on acquiring it forever! For man cannot live forever depending on his own efforts or the wealth he has. The grave is the inevitable end for both the wise and the foolish. Both the fool and the ignorant perish, and their wealth goes to another.

Can redemption then be achieved? The Old Testament required the offering of sacrifices as a way to obtain redemption. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). Isaac was redeemed with a great sacrifice. All these sacrifices symbolised the Redeemer: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world" (1 Peter 1:18-20 NIV).

We must comprehend this significant fact that determines our eternal destiny. Let us imagine the angel whom God sent into the houses of the Egyptians on the night the Israelites departed from Egypt. The angel goes into Pharaoh's house to destroy his firstborn. Now imagine that the great Pharaoh sees his firstborn dying before his eyes and, of course, wants to redeem him. He rallies the whole army to defend his son. His attempts fail, and he cannot protect his son's life. No one can save Pharaoh's son as he writhes on his deathbed. The same angel of destruction passes by the house of a poor child of the Israelites, sees the blood on the two doorposts and on the lintel and passes over the house. The firstborn in that house escapes death, because the angel of destruction sees a precious redemption of blood that saves the firstborn. Deliverance on the night of Exodus was not through money or power, but through the great sacrifice which God commanded and provided.

It is such a stupid attitude to boast of one's wealth, as if it was acquired through one's own intelligence. Man boasts of his wealth as though it would open the door of redemption for him! But he quickly realises that his grave beckons him, "for it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27). Redemption, however, is through faith in Christ, in whom we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die" (John 11:25,26).

3. **They are foolish in their attitude to God's commandments:** "Their inner thought is that their houses will continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man, despite his honour [riches], does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve of their sayings"(verses 11-13, brackets are ours). God said that man is dust and that he would return to dust. The foolish rich people, however, think that their houses will remain as their dwellings forever, and that they will live in them eternally. They thought that honour consists in living in palaces, though true honour consists in dwelling in the secret place of the Lord and the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91). Nevertheless, their lives end quickly: they desert their palaces to go dwell in graves. Their remembrance vanishes and fades away from the earth. God had given them houses, dwellings and fame; but, instead of thanking Him for His gifts, they thought that these gifts will preserve their names for ever. How foolish mortal man is! It is so true that The hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish (Proverbs 10:28). So let the righteous rejoice because "The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance" (Psalm 112:6).

The psalmist says that the foolish rich man does not dwell in honour; honour will not last for him, just like every other enjoyment of life. The rich fool is like an animal that perishes, because God gave him honour and wealth but he did not use them the right way. He gave him blessings to open his eyes to see the Giver, but he did not appreciate the favour of the Creator. Christ explained that all the gifts and talents we have are presents from Him, which we should manage faithfully and wisely (Matthew 25:14-29).

This is the way of those who are foolish. They trust that the way they think is right, depend on their intelligence and refuse to take anyone's advice. They think they need none of that. And of their posterity who approve of their sayings. They even led the following generation astray. They first led themselves astray, and ended up doing the same to their followers! Christ did well describing them as "Blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

4. **They are foolish in their attitude to the eternal life:** "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. But

God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for He shall receive me"(verses 14,15). They did not understand the implications of God's blessings very well. They did not realise that the blessings should lead them to return and repent to God. They behaved like dumb sheep that know only how to lose their way. Like sheep led to the slaughter they must go down to the Pit, and the upright must have the upper hand in the situation. The upright will say, "Who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion" (Psalm 103:4 NIV). As soon as the morning sun rises, the beauty of the foolish rich fades away, and the grave and the Pit become their abode! The psalmist draws a comparison between the unsuccessful ransom of verse 7, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother" and the proper one of verse 15, "But God will redeem my soul." The only true redemption for man comes from God alone, who redeemed us with a great Sacrifice.

The psalmist shows us the way to redemption in his statement: "For He shall receive me." This either refers to the day of repentance or the day of resurrection. On both these days the believer will say, "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24). On the day someone repents, God takes his soul away from error and restores it to the paths of righteousness, thus redeeming it from eternal death. The Bible says, "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). On the resurrection day, God receives the soul from the bottomless pit, lifts it up and delivers it through the glorious resurrection. On the second coming of Christ, the trumpet will be blown and the dead will rise incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:52). The Lord will command the sea to give up the dead that are in it, who were drowned and eaten up by the fish (Revelations 20:13). At the parousia of Christ, the believers, who are still alive, will be gathered from all around the earth to be taken to Him, and so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

### **8.3. Third: The Believer's Attitude to the Foolish Rich Folk**

#### **(verses 16-20)**

1. **The believer does not fear the foolish rich:** "Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lives he blesses himself (for men will praise you when you do well to yourself)"(verses 16-18). The psalmist had wondered: "Why should I fear?" (verse 5). He found that there was no reason for his fear, because the wicked who follow him will surely be punished. He began to encourage himself and the poor again, saying, "Do not be afraid. The foolish rich person who has long wronged, followed and surrounded you will no longer harm you. His wealth will not be carried with him to the future life." Job was certainly right: "Naked I came from my mothers womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken

away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). "As he came from his mothers womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labour which he may carry away in his hand" (Ecclesiastes 5:15). Paul was also right in saying that "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7). God said to the foolish rich man who thought he would enjoy his wealth for a long time, "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). Alexander the Great showed genuine wisdom when he demanded that, on his death, his shroud should not have a pocket, to show the world that he took nothing of his possessions to the grave. The day President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt was installed into his office he said, "The shroud has no pockets!" The foolish rich man, however, "while he lives he blesses himself" (verse 18). He congratulates himself for his riches. He counts himself fortunate and says to himself, "And I'll say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry'" (Luke 12:19). The fool died that very night!

On the other hand, the believer brings to himself the blessings of the Lord. The people praise him and bless him: "Men will praise you when you do well to yourself." The believer blesses his life and his soul as he repents and receives Christ's salvation, extends his hand and partakes of the Lord's communion, testifies of Christ's grace to a man who is far away from the Lord, follows a weak believer to build his faith life and takes his quiet time with God regularly. When the Lord fills his heart, both his heart and life get blessed. Though the believer's wealth will not descend with him to the grave, just like the foolish rich man, the good works of the believer will follow him to the grave and beyond: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them" (Revelations 14:13). The believer will hear God's voice, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21).

- 2. The believer knows the destiny of the foolish rich man:** "He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man who is in honour, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish"(verses 19,20). How terrible the destiny of the foolish rich man is! His soul will join those who preceded him in spiritual ignorance, those who died and remain in the world of eternal darkness. They will never have a chance to see light again! They lived in spiritual darkness here, and they ended up into spiritual darkness there. The destiny of the foolish rich man will be like that of the foolish rich men who have gone before him. God gave them minds to understand that He was the source of their blessing, that they were His own. He made them honourable, but they did not recognise it, so they became like beasts. They did not know how to distinguish between real riches and false riches. They considered temporary riches to be greater than spiritual riches, which are based on ones relationship with God. They thought they could do without the eternal riches of being in God's presence eternally. Everyone who thinks that

his life depends on his possessions is a fool, "for man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

How beautiful is Christ's advice: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

## **8.4. Questions**

1. Why are some rich people fools?
2. What are the comments of a pious person watching rich fools?

## **9. Psalm Fifty**

### **Hear, O my people, and I will speak!**

**A Psalm of Asaph.**

**1 The Mighty One, God the LORD, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down.**

**2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.**

**3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.**

**4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people:**

**5 "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."**

**6 Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge. Selah**

**7 "Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I am God, your God!"**

**8 I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are continually before Me.**

**9 I will not take a bull from your house, nor goats out of your folds.**

**10 For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.**

**11 I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine.**

**12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.**

**13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?"**

**14 Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.**

**15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."**

**16 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth,**

**17 Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you?**

**18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers.**

**19 You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit.**

**20 You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.**

**21 These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.**

**22 "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver:**

**23 Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."**

This is a didactic psalm like Psalm 49. Psalm 49 addresses all people, whereas this psalm addresses the children of Israel. In it God judges them, making the powers of nature His witnesses against them, as He did in Isaiah 1 and Micah 6. He gave them the law on top of Mount Sinai to keep it. But here he comes in great glory that resembles the glory of His presence at the top of the mountain, to ask them about their obedience. He wants to know the extent and manner of this obedience. He emphasises that He prefers a thankful heart to the offering of sacrifices and warns the dissimulators of the deplorable end that awaits them unless they repent. God demands that they practice practical worship that manifests itself in loving Him and their neighbours, as He had commanded in the Ten Commandments. This does not mean, however, that God rejected the law of sacrifice, "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). God meant for sacrifices to be offered with a pure and sincere heart.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: God judges His people (verses 1-6)
- Second: Ritual worship versus spiritual worship (verses 7-15)
- Third: God rebukes the dissimulators (verses 16-23)

## **9.1. First: God Judges His People**

### **(verses 1-6)**

1. **The Judge:** "The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth"(verses 1,2). God introduces Himself as the Lord of lords, the Judge of judges, the just and holy God of perfect beauty who shines on His people from the capital of His



kingdom. "For the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). In Jerusalem the atonement and peace sacrifices are offered. This Judge summons His people to appear before Him. Each one of them is to submit an account of what he did. He kept silent about their punishment, and they thought He was not there or that He did not consider their evils (verse 21). Yet, He is God of the gods that people made, because He made the matter of which these gods were made (wood or stone). He is God the Lord, that is the Lord of the judges. It is within the power of the judge to pronounce someone guilty or innocent. In that sense God called the judges gods (Psalm 82:1-4). We are, then, before the Judge of judges, the God of gods, the Lord who calls upon all the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down to witness the judgement He will pass on His people. He asks, "Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard" (Isaiah 5:3). "For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ ... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10,12). This is what will made the believers glad: "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). The wicked, however, will be terrified because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

2. **The greatness of the trial:** "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him"(verse 3). Fire stands for God's justice that burns and destroys His enemies; the tempestuous wind stands for His power that scatters them like chaff. "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send his angels and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the earth to the farthest part of heaven" (Mark 13:26,27). "For our God is a consuming fire ... He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind ... From the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire" (Hebrews 12:29; Psalm 18:10,12). "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).
3. **The witnesses of the trial:** "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people"(verse 4). Both heaven and earth witnessed the greatness of the miracles God did in taking care of His people: heaven divided the Red Sea and commanded the pillar of cloud to overshadow them from the scorching sun. Now heaven calls upon them to witness His fair trial of His people. Heaven says, "Hear, O mountains, the Lord's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel" (Micah 6:2 NIV).

4. **The accused:** "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have a covenant with Me by sacrifice. Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge"(verses 5,6). God commands His angels to gather together His saints (Matthew 24:31). He gave that title because they are His own, even if their conduct did not befit their title.

Paul called the Corinthians saints because this was their position in Christ, although holiness did not describe their present state. He rebuked their mistakes and called them to a life of repentance and holiness. God always starts by judging His household, the ones who worship Him, because He expects them to be conscious of spiritual worship more than anyone else. They are the ones who made a covenant with Him by sacrifice and pledged to obey Him. "Then he [Moses] sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people" (Exodus 24:3-8). He said to his people, "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5,6). Then Christ brought in a new covenant through His blood (Matthew 26:28). And He guarantees it. Since we enjoy the privileges of the covenant, we also carry its responsibilities. Heaven will be witness to the divine justice: "The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory" (Psalm 97:6).

## 9.2. Second: Ritual Worship versus Spiritual Worship

### (verses 7-15)

1. **God reproves His people:** "Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I am God, your God!"(verse 7). God reproves His people because, although He is the law-maker and the covenant-maker, they disobeyed Him. He reproves them because, although He brought them into a covenant with Himself and made them belong to Him, and although they made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, they still broke the covenant.
2. **The subject of reproof (verses 8-13):** God reproves His people because their worship was ritual and void of spirit. He does not reprove them because they omitted offering sacrifices to Him; on the contrary, they fully performed their ritual obligations. God demanded that they offer two sheep daily, one in the morning and one in the evening (Numbers 28:3,4), and they did. He did not demand that out of need for sacrifices, but because He sought hearts that focused on Him and worshipped Him willingly and out of love. He owns thousands of animals on thousands of hills. He own thousands of birds that fill the skies. He is their Creator and He knows their number. Sacrifices were not important in themselves, but rather the living hearts that they represented. He reprovved His people through Jeremiah, saying, "For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.

But this is what I commanded them, saying 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you'" (Jeremiah 7:22,23). The prophet Micah wondered, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? ... Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? The Lord answered, ...To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8). He seeks the loving heart that offers a sacrifice, like the heart of David who said, "Blessed are You, Lord ... for all that is in heaven and earth is Yours ... You are exalted as head over all ... But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You" (1 Chronicles 29:10-14).

3. **The necessity of spiritual worship: (verses 14,15)** God explains that spiritual worship requires three things:
  1. **To thank Him:** "Offer to God thanksgiving"(verse 14a). "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15). "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:17).
  2. **To pay ones vows:** "And pay your vows to the Most High"(verse 14b). "I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people" (Psalm 116:18). "But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). There were three types of vows in the Old Testament:
    - **Vowing oneself:**To keep away from certain lawful things to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the Lord (Numbers 6:2-21 NIV).
    - **Vowing ones child:** "If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the Lord ... a male ... a female"(Leviticus 27:1-8 NIV). This was the kind of vow Hannah made when she dedicated her firstborn son. She said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 1:11).
    - **Vowing an animal:** "And if it [the vow] is a beast such as men may bring as an offering to the Lord, all such that any man gives to the Lord shall be holy. He shall not substitute it or exchange it"(Leviticus 27:9-13,27-29).
  3. **To pray:** "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me"(verse 15). The right order is: "(1) Ask, and it will be given to you, (2) Seek, and you will find, (3) Knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). These are the three degrees of prayer. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble" is a divine encouragement to us. "I will deliver you": The answer will surely come. "And you shall glorify Me." The believers life goes in a complete circle. We sacrifice

thanksgiving to the Most High, pay Him our vows, call upon Him on the day of trouble and He will deliver us. Then we sacrifice thanksgiving to the Most High again! "My heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, will I seek'" (Psalm 27:8).

### 9.3. Third: God Rebukes the Dissimulators

#### (verses 16-23)

1. **Rebuking dissimulation (verses 16-21):**In the previous verses God rebuked the ritual worshiper, and demanded that he worship in spirit and truth. In verses 16-21 He began to rebuke the dissimulator who declared his allegiance to God with his mouth, but his heart was far away from Him. He simply breaks the commandments of the first tablet of the Law that speak of man's duties toward God, and the commandments of the second tablet of Law that concern his duties toward men.
  1. **Breaking the commandments of the first tablet:**But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you?" (verses 16,17). "Hearing what was written in the Book of the Covenant, the people said, `All that the Lord has said we will do'" (Exodus 24:7). But they did not carry out what they had promised, and the Lord said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouths, and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me" (Isaiah 29:13; cf. Mark 7:6).
  2. **Breaking the commandments of the second tablet (verses 18-20):**
    - **They stole:** "When you saw a thief, you consented with him"(verse 18a). This breaks the eighth commandment (Exodus 20:15).
    - **They committed adultery:** "And have been a partaker with adulterers"(verse 18b). This breaks the seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14).
    - **They gave a false testimony:** "You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mothers son"(verse 19,20). This breaks the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16).
2. **The consequences of dissimulation:** "These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes"(verse 21). God bore long with the dissimulator and did not hasten His punishment in order to give him a chance to repent. The dissimulator thought that God forgets or does not care. Perhaps he joined himself to those who say, "The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil" (Zephaniah 1:12). The New Testament gives an advice to this dissimulator: "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed. God will give to each

person according to what he has done" (Romans 2:4-6 NIV).

3. **The cure for rituality and dissimulation (verses 22,23):**In these two verses God addresses the dissimulators and those who practice a traditional worship that has no spirit. He shows them the cure for their sin:
  1. **Remembering God:** "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver"(verse 22). Forgetting God is the foundation of sin and its consequence is evil. When men forget God they act as if God were not there! But if they do not remember God in all they do, He will tear them to pieces like a lion, and there will be none to deliver them.
  2. **Thanking God:** "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God"(verse 23). Spiritual worship always produces salvation from sin and every kind of trouble, whether past, present or future.

This psalm teaches us that God is not interested in the quantity of the gifts, but in the condition of the givers heart. He is not interested in the sweetness of the singers voices as much as in the love in their hearts. He does not care about the outward formalities of worship as much as the inward state of the heart. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

#### **9.4. Questions**

1. What are the differences between ritual and spiritual worship?
2. What does this psalm say about hypocrites?

#### **10. Quiz**

There are two questions at the end of each chapter. If you answer 15 of these questions correctly you may join our Bible school by correspondence and work toward a certificate.

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