

Meditations on the Psalms

Volume Three: Psalms 21-30

by

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1. Psalm Twenty-One

Thanks for Triumph

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

2 You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

3 For You meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.

4 He asked life from You, and You gave it to him-- length of days forever and ever.

5 His glory is great in Your salvation; honour and majesty You have placed upon him.

6 For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.

7 For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

8 Your hand will find all Your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You.

9 You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

10 Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men.

11 For they intended evil against You; they devised a plot which they are not able to perform.

12 Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your string toward their faces.

13 Be exalted, O Lord, in Your own strength! We will sing and praise Your power.

In psalm twenty, we heard the believers pray to the Lord to give victory to their leader. Now in this psalm we hear another confirmation of God's response and answer. Truly, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). In Psalm 20 they asked, and in Psalm 21 they thank God who answered them and gave them their desire, expressing their confidence that He will also give!

Psalm 21, then, is the psalm of the struggling church, whose prayer for its shepherd has been

heard by God. It can also be a prophetic psalm to be sung by the triumphant church as it declares the victorious end to the struggle. Again it is a psalm of the Christian family that listens to the head sing a song of thanksgiving, and a psalm of workers listening to their boss thanking God who answered the prayer of his men for their establishment.

This psalm is considered a prophetic psalm of Christ, the Son of David. The Jewish Targum (a number of ancient exegetical translations of parts of the Old Testament in Aramaic) interprets king in verses 1,7 as "the Messianic king". This is what Paul also says, "For He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Rejoicing in triumph (verses 1-7)
- Second: The permanent defeat of the enemy (verses 8-12)
- Third: A permanent celebration of triumph (verse 13)

1.1. First: Rejoicing in Triumph

(verses 1-7)

1. **Joy was the result of a miracle:** "The king shall have joy in Your strength, O Lord; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!"(verse 1). The leader they prayed for did not win the battle owing to his own strength, "chariots and horses" (Psalm 20:7), but owing to "Your strength" and "Your salvation", O Lord. Our human vanity makes the strings of our harps lose tone, and start producing flat tunes. His strength and salvation, however, stretch the strings of our harps, making us sing the songs of salvation and miraculous victory with joy, because "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). "For our hearts shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name" (Psalm 33:21). "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).
2. **Joy was the result of an answered prayer:** "You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips"(verse 2). Desire means a deeply seated urge, not just a passing fancy. Also the Hebrew word for request could also be interpreted as "inheritance". So his request was not merely a hope, but a true, indisputable fact. Jesus said to His disciples, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15), which He actually did. Solomon said, "The desire of the righteous will be granted" (Proverbs 10:24). God fulfilled this holy desire and answered his plea.

The word "Selah" comes at the end of the second verse, as if to stop us for a while in order to meditate on how the prayer was answered, so that we would be encouraged to pray more(John 16:24).

3. **Joy was the result of God's providence:** "For You meet him with blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head"(verse 3). God Himself is pictured as having gone out to meet him with all the goodness of success, as fulfilment of the saying "A good blessing will come upon them" (Proverbs 24:25). Some people have blessings but they abuse them. Yet, there are good blessings that come from the Lord to those who walk in goodness. The word "meet" can be translated precede or go before. It was customary in ancient Israel for a shepherd to go before the sheep, and Christ said that His sheep hear His voice, that He knows them and they follow Him (John 10:3-5). The Lord goes before the believers carrying the blessings of goodness for them, and they follow Him rejoicing in His surpassing providence.

Then the Lord set a crown of pure gold on the king's head, as a declaration of the renewal of his kingship over his people that prays for him. Likewise, the Lord sets crowns of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), crowns of life (James 1:12; Revelations 2:10), and crowns of glory (1 Peter 5:4) on the heads of His faithful believing servants. They are crowns of gold (Revelations 4:4). I wonder if any believer deserves all this? Christ carried on His head a crown of thorns to give us a crown of gold, endured shame and dishonour to give us glory and honour. Let us give thanks to our good God with all joy!

4. **Joy was the result of receiving eternal life:** "He asked life from You, and You gave it to him- length of days forever and ever"(verse 4). This means that God lengthened the years of the king's life, made its quality deeper, imparting him with a fruitful and prosperous life. Moreover, He gave him "length of days forever". God gives us eternal life that lasts "forever and ever" when Christ enters our hearts, and our life becomes His life. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3; cf. John 3:14-16). At that time we will enjoy eternal life, because the eternal One who dwells within us makes the perishable imperishable, and endows it with immortality!

King Hezekiah received fifteen years more than his life time (Isaiah 38:5) but eventually died. Lazarus received an unknown number of years after Christ raised him from the grave (John 11:43), but he died again. Obviously the physical life perishes, but we receive an eternal, endless life, when Christ dwells in our heart.

5. **Joy was the result of receiving honour and majesty:** "His glory is great in Your salvation; honour and majesty You have placed upon him"(verse 5). Glory, honour and majesty are all divine attributes, which He bestows upon the victorious king to lift up his head. Today we realise that our glory, honour and majesty are in the fruit of the Holy Spirit; which is love, joy, peace, and long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. As Christ enters our hearts, He gives us eternal life and the Holy Spirit starts to bear fruit in us, which is the essence of majesty. "Love" starts to appear in us and all people get to know that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:35). The "joy of the Lord" starts to appear, too, and it becomes our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

"Peace" starts to well up within us even when we lose those who are dearest to us (2 Kings 4:26).

Dear believer, you who received Christ in your heart, if you do not have the fruit of the Spirit, please check your spiritual life, because all these blessings are yours by right, because glory, honour and majesty are the portion of all those whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelations 3:5).

- 6. Joy was the result of becoming a blessing to the people:** "For You have made him most blessed for ever"(verse 6a). The Lord said to Abraham, "Get out of your country...I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1,2). Everyone who confidently, lovingly and obediently follows the Lord will receive blessings, as well as become a source of blessings to those around him. A preacher may encourage his suffering audience, because life shocks them again and they yield to their suffering once more. But there is a blessing that lasts forever, which is the blessing of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ: salvation from the sins of the past by forgiveness, from the sins of the present by sanctification and the completion of salvation in the future by entering the heavenly glories, which is the perfection of joy and gladness in the Lord's presence.

"You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence"(verse 6b). "To make exceedingly glad" is actually an expression meaning the animating singsong of a caravan leader that stimulates the camels to march in the arid deserts carrying their often heavy loads easily and smoothly. Likewise, the Lord gladdens the king to carry the responsibilities of government by letting him hear the singing, the chanting and the prayers of his people on his behalf him.

- 7. Joy came to stay:** "For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved"(verse 7). Trusting means dependence on the truth of a certain news we hear, and acting on and in the light of this dependence. The king knew that God hears prayers, and experienced a great response, hence he learned to trust the Lord, and therefore he no longer doubts or is unstable. James said, "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). He who trusts the Lord and His grace, however, is stable. The world gives an impermanent sort of joy, whose sweetness may end up in bitterness and whose laughter may end up in weeping. But when the Lord gives joy, it lasts forever, because the recipient in this case trusts the Lord for its provision.

1.2. Second: The Permanent Defeat of the Enemy

(verses 8-12)

God gave victory to His people over the enemy that tried to invade them and was defeated, just as all the enemies of the Lord will be surely defeated, the last of whom will be "your

adversary the devil" who seems like a "roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8). But he is actually defeated. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven" (Luke 10:18). But the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who went conquering and to conquer (Revelations 5:5; 6:2) is the only One whom God exalted and gave a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9). The gates of hell shall not prevail against His kingdom, and no weapon formed against it shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17).

God is always the conqueror, but He is such a democratic God that He allows opposition. He allows Satan to act freely, knowing that the final victory always belongs to the truth. The enemy may be shouting at the top of his voice and thinking he is distracting the truth by lying, but the quiet, prayerful congregation of believers realises that the low voice (1 Kings 19:12) is undoubtedly coming to encourage, edify and bless them, and at the same time defeat the enemy.

In these verses we find the following five facts:

1. **The enemies' defeat will continue because they are vulnerable:** "Your hand will find all your enemies; Your right hand will find those who hate You"(verse 8). Nothing is hidden from the Lord: "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). If the enemy thinks he can make himself secure by hiding his plots from the Lord, then he is a mistaken fool and his defeat is certain!
2. **The enemies' defeat will continue because they will be inevitably defeated:** "You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them"(verse 9). The Lord will destroy the enemies like fuel in a furnace, "For, behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up', says the Lord of hosts, 'that will leave them neither root nor branch.'" (Malachi 4:1).
3. **The enemies' defeat will continue because their descendants will be cut off:** "Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men"(verse 10). The wicked will not give birth to children who are as wicked as they are, either because the Lord will destroy their offspring or because the offspring will not want to walk in the ways of their wicked fathers. God is capable of doing both things. Even if the enemies think that they are the majority, they will not triumph, because the Lord will decimate their descendants them, so much that they won't be able to train or recruit other wicked people like them.
4. **The enemies' defeat will continue because they are continually unable:** "For they intend evil against You; they devised a plot which they are unable to perform"(verse 11). No matter what they arrange or set up, they still cannot bring it forth. Herod the Great did not think that the baby Jesus would escape his malicious intrigue of murdering all the

babies of Bethlehem. But his intrigue did not succeed. Herod Agrippa did not think that the four squads (16 soldiers) would be unable to guard Peter in prison, neither did he think that the prison gates would open of their own accord. However, in His love and power, God saved Peter from the evil they had intended against him.

5. **The enemies' defeat will continue because they will always run away:** "Therefore You will make them turn their back; You will make ready Your arrows on Your strings toward their faces"(verse 12). Turn their back means that God's attack against them will make them turn and run away. When they turn around again to attack God's people, the arrow will be ready on the string to hit them and turn them back again. These words may seem too optimistic, but who said that God's children should not be optimistic? They are optimistic by nature because they follow the conquering Saviour, who imparts conquest to those who belong to Him, so that they would be more than conquerors through Him who loved them (Romans 8:37).

1.3. Third: The Permanent Celebration of Triumph

(verse 13)

The whole nation joins in saying this last verse, with hearts full of confidence that the Lord will show His power. "Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength! We will sing and praise Your power" (verse 13). The Lord is exalted by His own power; the believer can't exalt Him! Who are we to glorify God? It is rather God who glorifies Himself, and us together with Him. Our glorification of God should be understood in the context of conducting ourselves in a way that brings glory to God, a way that is acceptable to Him.

On the diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, the poet Rudyard Kipling wrote, "In order not to forget on this diamond celebration that majesty and strength are God's alone, let all men keep silent and be humble before the Most High." [Such a quotation must be taken verbatim from the English reference because it is a very famous quotation??] Let us now keep silent, and calm our hearts down before God, so that He may fulfil the promises in this psalm of victory to us.

1.4. Questions

1. The psalmist mentions seven reasons for rejoicing. mention them.
2. Give two reasons for the permanent defeat of the enemy.

2. Psalm Twenty-Two

Prophecies of the Cross and Resurrection

To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David.

1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?

2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them.

5 They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.

7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8 "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon you from birth. From my mother's womb You have been my God.

11 Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.

13 They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

18 They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

19 But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog.

21 Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

23 You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard.

25 My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever!

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.

28 For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.

29 All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive.

30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this.

David wrote this psalm a thousand years before Christ. In it he explained, by the spirit of prophecy, the sufferings of the cross and the glories of the resurrection. The heading of the psalm is "To the chief musician. Set to "The Dear of the Dawn." We gather from this that the psalm was always sung before sunrise. It captures the suffering of the cross that our Redeemer endured on our behalf, till the day of resurrection broke with its great light. This psalm is a prophecy of Christ, and does not, under any circumstances, express David's situation, for David was never:

1. **"Despised of the people"(verse 6):**David was loved by the people even in the worst situations when King Saul was chasing him. They were the ones who sang to him, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). Yet, Christ was described by Isaiah in His suffering state as "despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3).
2. **"For there is none to help"(verse 11):**David was never without a helper, because the Lord was always by His side. Christ, however, could say this on the cross, because God hid His face from Him in His capacity as a representative for sinners during the crucifixion.
3. **"They pierced My hands and My feet"(verse 16):**This could have never happened to David, but only to Christ on the cross.
4. **"I can count all My bones"(verse 17):**David was never hanged without clothes and in such a position that all his bones were showing, so that he could count them.
5. **"They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots"(verse 18):**This has never happened to David. It is exactly what the soldiers did with Christ.

In fact, the psalm is an Old Testament prophecy, inspired by the Holy Spirit, foretelling the episode of Christ's crucifixion. Verse 22 says, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You." Paul said in the New Testament that these words were uttered by Christ (Hebrews 2:12). The first verse in the psalm says, "My God,

"My God, why have You forsaken Me?" These were the first words Christ uttered on the cross as He felt the Father hiding His face from Him and leaving Him to pay the wages of our sins as a representative for mankind. After offering the sacrifice and bringing atonement and redemption onto the scene, it was about Him that it was said, "He has done it" (verse 31). In the Septuagint the verse reads: "He has finished it"!

A thousand years before the crucifixion, this psalm, by the spirit of prophecy, described the darkest and last hours of Jesus' life on earth, and foretold the very words He would utter on the cross. The Evangelists referred to this psalm as a prophecy concerning the cross (Matthew 27:35-46; John 19:24,28,30).

Verses 1-21 speak of Christ's suffering. When He was born Herod attempted to murder Him. Later He was tried by Satan in the wilderness, to keep Him away from the cross. At the end He was resisted by the leaders of society and finally crucified. Yet, all their intentions for crucifying Him came to nothing, because He rose from the dead on the third day. The Jews assumed that they killed Him and put an end to His message, but their evil expectations were defeated, since God lifted Him up to Him and gave Him a name which is above every name, so that "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations" (verse 27).

For Christ the cross was not the end, just as suffering was not the end of Psalm 22. In its latter part (verses 22-31) the psalm announces Christ's triumph. One cannot talk about Christ's cross and redemptive suffering without talking about His resurrection by His own strength and might, which Paul explains as follows: "...who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification" (Romans 4:25).

There are two more obvious things in this psalm, which prove that it speaks of the crucified, risen Christ:

1. The psalm does not include any confession of sin, since Christ is the only sinless person.
2. The psalm does not include any curses, which we read in all the psalms that deal with the relationship with the enemies. Only Christ did not curse those who rose against Him, but rather asked for forgiveness on behalf of those who crucified Him and taught His disciples to love their enemies.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Prophecies of Christ's suffering (verses 1-21)
- Second: Prophecies of Christ's triumph (verses 22-31)

2.1. First: Prophecies of Christ's Suffering (verses 1-21)

1. The prayer of the suffering Christ (verses 1-5)

The prayer includes:

1. **An expression of emotional anguish:** "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent"(verses 1,2). It is a cry of perplexity and astonishment, when faith struggles with suffering in the one who cries out. Faith holds fast to God "My God" and suffering asks, "Why have You forsaken Me?" It is a cry of a suffering soul, who takes hold of God with both his hands and asks Him, "Why have You forsaken Me?" He says this in the flesh, as a representative and substitute for us, because He is our Redeemer, our next of kin, who is in charge of us. All the excruciating pains of the cross, the horrid mockery of people, the emotional pain that is far beyond the physical one, could not separate Him from God, who demanded the wages of the world's sin from Him, for He is "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus did not do anything that should call God to forsake Him, but because of our sins God hid His face from Him, as it is written: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The unbearable pain made Christ's words sound like groaning: "Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?" He sounded like a lion groaning from pain! "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent." He was entirely sure that God was with Him, but, He wondered, why doesn't He answer and give Him salvation and peace?

2. **Turning to the faithful and holy God:** "But You are holy, who inhabit the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were not ashamed"(verses 3-5). The psalmist trusts the Lord, because He is holy and different from the imperfect people, as well as pure, just and faithful. Therefore, His people praises Him even in the midst of their severe suffering and anguish of soul. Their praises rise up like a fragrant incense toward His great throne. In verses 4,5 the psalm confesses that God saved and delivered His people who trusted Him. So, why doesn't this happen now? It is a prayer of a forsaken trusting person, crying out to the faithful and wonder-working God of old.

2. The humility of the suffering Christ (verses 6-8):

1. **They did not appreciate Him rightly:** "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people"(verse 6). He is the perfect Man, yet He agreed to be considered a worm, despised, and worthy of being crushed down under the foot, yet completely harmless! We read the same description in relation to Christ in Isaiah

- 41:14. It is also written of Him: "He is despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:3), so much that the masses asked Pilate to release Barabbas the murderer and nail Christ to the cross. They did not regard Him as a human being, but insulted and stabbed Him as "a worm", weighing Him down with His own cross, so that He fell under it.
2. **He was mocked:** "All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head [indicating their contempt, hatred and rejection of Him], saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him'"(verses 7,8). This prophecy came true down to the minutest detail at the cross, for the priests and the people, the Jews and the Gentiles, the civilians and the soldiers, the honourable and the thieves all mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save...He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him" (Matthew 27:42,43). What they did not know was that he did not save Himself because He wanted to save us.

As we read these verses we wonder: Should we marvel at the cruelty of man? Or should we marvel at our Redeemer's love when He prayed for those who crucified Him, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do"? (Luke 23:34). How cruel man is, and how far off greater God's love is!

3. **The trust of the suffering Christ (verses 9-11):**

"But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust when I was on my mother's breast. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God."

His enemies said, "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him", and it really happened. God turned their derision into a prayer. All His past life proved that He was loved by God, and this was the content of the message that the angel brought to The Virgin Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One to be born is to be called the Son of God." This is also what the angels declared to the shepherds: "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 1:35; 2:10,11).

Then He changes His question in verse 1, "Why have You forsaken Me?" into a request: "Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help." He repeats the same request in verse 19.

From the trust expressed in verses 9-11 we learn that faith carries its weapon everywhere, no matter how fierce the battle is! Therefore Christ says, by the spirit of prophecy, through Isaiah, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and from the people no one was with Me" (Isaiah 63:3).

4. **Christ's suffering at the hands of those around Him (verses 12-18):**

In these verses the psalmist describes his cruel enemies, and records what they have done to him.

1. **Their descriptions**

1. **They are like many strong bulls:** "Many bulls have surrounded Me, strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me...Save me from...the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me"(verses 12,21b). They are like the strong bulls that graze in the succulent pastures of Bashan, which are prize pastures for rearing the fattest and strongest bulls. They are as fierce as wild oxen with strong horns. Christ's enemies who encircle Him are also strong when they attack Him.
2. **He describes them as lions:** "They gape at Me with their mouths, as a raging and roaring lion...Save Me from the lion's mouth!"(verses 13,21a).
3. **He describes them as dogs:** "For dogs have surrounded Me...Deliver...My precious life from the power of the dog"(verses 16,20b).
4. **He describes them as wicked:** "The assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me"(verse 16b). Pilate tried to rescue Him but they shouted all the more, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

2. **What they did to Him:**

1. **They brought Him to His end:** "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me"(verse 14). This is a true description of someone whose body has been stretched on a cross till it was torn to pieces. He is like water, which when poured out, leaves the place where it was before and is no more there.
2. **They made Him be terribly thirsty:** "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death"(verse 15). When dehydration started to take its toll on Jesus, He said, "I thirst!" (John 19:28).
3. **They pierced His hands and feet:** "They pierced My hands and My feet"(verse 16). This is what happened to Jesus on the cross.
4. **They caused His bones to stick out:** "I can count all My bones"(verse 17). This is possible only when someone's body is fully stretched on a cross, which makes all His bones stick out and be visible. The first Adam was made naked because of sin, and the second Adam was made naked to cover our nakedness that was caused by the first Adam. Christ has covered us with His righteousness.
5. **They make sport of Him:** "They look and stare at Me"(verse 17). They made Him the laughing stock and a public spectacle.

6. **They took His garments:** "They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots"(verse 18). They anticipate His death by taking His clothes and dividing them among themselves. This was fulfilled to the letter at the foot of the cross (Matthew 27:35; John 19:23,24).
5. **The supplication of the suffering Christ (verses 19-21):**

After describing the cruelty of Christ's enemies and His sufferings at their hands, by the spirit of prophecy, he turned his gaze from suffering to God, and said, "But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My strength, hasten to help Me" (verse 19). In the severity of His weakness He calls upon the Lord.

2.2. Second: Prophecies of Christ's Triumph (verses 22-31)

Part two presents some prophecies about Christ's triumph. We mustn't look at Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion, without looking, at the same time, at the dawn of Sunday, the time of His resurrection. Christ, who was nailed to the cross, died and was buried, also rose triumphantly, being the only One whose grave could not contain His body. Neither did His body return to the grave, and it will not return even again, because He is the Living God whom the grave cannot contain. After giving Himself as a ransom for us He arose triumphantly, defeating death. His grave became vacant, because He rose from the dead by His own strength and might! The author of the psalm was persuaded that His prayers were answered, therefore He began shouting the shouts of triumph.

In this part we find a public call for praise (verses 22-26), and see how praise blesses everybody, including the coming generation (verses 27-31).

1. **A public call for praise (verses 22-26):**
 1. **The psalmist Himself begins by praise:** "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You"(verse 22). By God's name He means all those things through which God declared who He is to us. The news the psalmist is declaring here is the cross and resurrection of Christ, which demonstrates God's love, holiness, power, wisdom, righteousness and redemption. In this verse Christ calls the believers His brethren. The writer of Hebrews says, "For both he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not shamed to call them brethren." Then he quotes verse 22 of our psalm and explains that it was Christ who said it (Hebrews 2:11,12). This praise takes place in the midst of the whole congregation, in public, as a confession and declaration of God's great work. "I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great congregation; indeed I do not restrain my lips, O Lord, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within My heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation" (Psalm 40:9,10).

2. **The words of praise:** "You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard"(verses 23,24). This call is extended to all those who share the faith of Abraham. They have chosen like Jacob, regardless their nationality and denomination, to praise God who glorified His Christ and lifted Him up to Him, saying of Him, "He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:11,12).

The psalmist transports us in these two verses to a new atmosphere of praise and thanksgiving to God for the cross. That is exactly what Christ did, for after He instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is a memorial of His death, He praised with the disciples and they all went to the Mount Of Olives where He was arrested (Matthew 26:30).

3. **It is public praise:** "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation"(verse 25a). God filled the psalmist's heart with joy and gladness, so much that His tongue was released in acclamation. His praise is about the Lord because of what the Lord has done for Him. This triumph should be characteristic of our feelings now, for which we should be praising God in the great congregation, the assembly of the believers and of those who will believe! To both we should say, "Christ has risen, indeed!"
4. **It is coupled with a payment of vows:** "I will pay My vows before those who fear Him"(verse 25b). Christ paid what He promised, and gave His own life, as He said when He came into the world, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come- in the volume of the book it is written of Me- to do Your will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:5-7).
5. **It is satisfactory praise:** "The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever!"(verse 26). It is a banquet that satisfies the poor in spirit and those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. They were starving but the Lord satisfies them at His table, which He prepared in the presence of their enemies! It is a call for satisfaction, if we accept God's precious call, which says, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance" (Isaiah 55:1,2). The Mosaic law prescribed the "peace offering" to the believer who appreciated God's

favour and graciousness with him; he would burn a part of it and eat a part of it with his family before the Lord on the same day he offered it. It was a thanksgiving banquet (Leviticus 7:29-34). Christ said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Now let us come to Him in order to find true satisfaction, because everyone who accepts Christ's call will be honoured by Christ's dwelling in his heart. When Christ comes into his heart He satisfies his life (Revelations 3:20).

2. Praise blesses everybody (verses 27-31).

1. **The Gentiles worship God:** The psalmist's vision extends from the "descendants of Jacob" (verse 23) to the whole world, and he sees everybody praising and worshipping the Lord. He says, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before Him" (verse 27). This is the first blessing, for the message goes for all. All the ends of the earth shall "remember...turn...worship". Remember as a result of the Holy Spirit's conviction, and say together with the prodigal son, "I will rise and go to my father." Turn in repentance leaving behind all other gods. Worship in adoration and obedience. Today, in all the corners of the earth, the good news is being preached, and the cross and resurrection of Christ is being proclaimed, and millions are turning back to Him in repentance. So let us present ourselves before Him, kneeling down in submission.
2. **The reason the Gentiles worship the Lord:** "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations"(verse 28). Christ performed miracles, and still does, demonstrating His authority over nature, sickness, unclean spirits and death. He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18,19). As a result those who have been redeemed will shout to Him, saying "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing...forever and ever" (Revelations 5:12-13).
3. **There are three kinds of worshipers:**
 1. **The oppressors:** "All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship"(verse 29a). They are the ones who persecute others, rob them of their wealth, and oppress the poor. When these repent, the Lord feeds them at His table, and they prosper spiritually and worship Him in truth.
 2. **The oppressed:** "All those who go down to the dust shall go before Him, even he who cannot keep himself alive"(verse 29b). Perhaps the psalmist meant by "those who go down to the dust" the oppressed who can't keep themselves alive because they are dead in sins and trespasses, who worship and praise God when they receive spiritual life from Him. Perhaps he meant all humanity, for no one can keep himself alive, because it is appointed for men to die. Christ, however,

promises them everlasting life, therefore they worship God in gratitude.

3. **The coming generation:** "A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation, they will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this"(verses 30,31). The present generation that experienced the divine grace will tell of it to the coming one. This is our responsibility toward the next generation, for those who received the torch of light and the gospel from their forerunners should hand it over to the coming generation brighter and more brilliant. This is the hope of the world today and tomorrow.
4. **The reason the psalmist praises:** "He has done this"(verse 31). These are the same last words Christ uttered on the cross: "It is finished!" Salvation has been completed, hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

Now let us remember the suffering of Christ, and His triumph on our behalf. Let us be satisfied by His heavenly banquet to which He invites us, expecting each of us to say, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You."

2.3. Questions

1. Psalm 22 is a prophecy of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Why can't it be about David, the author of the psalm?
2. In verses 29-31 the psalmist mentions three kinds of worshippers. What is the difference between them?

3. Psalm Twenty-Three

The Psalm of the Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

This psalm has filled our world with overwhelming joy, the joy of trusting the Lord who shepherds His people. It is also the joy of feeling secure in God's faithfulness with those who follow Him in confidence, love and obedience. For when we follow the Lord the shepherd we need nothing and fear nothing, because He meets all financial, spiritual, mental, psychological and emotional needs, today and every day. He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

This psalm was written all in the singular; the psalmist spoke of himself and of his relationship with his God: "The Lord is my shepherd." It is a personal psalm, for every lamb in the flock can speak in a personal way about what the Lord does in the whole flock.

How many suffering believers found comfort in the words of this psalm, how many poor people were consoled by them, how many sick persons were anointed by its healing balsam, and how many believers went on to his eternal rest in peace singing the verses of this psalm! It has broken the bonds of thousands of people, just as the angel broke the bonds of Peter in prison!

Saint Augustine said that Psalm 119 is like a big shady tree, while Psalm 23 is like a beautiful blossoming rose that fills the atmosphere with fragrance. Martin Luther called this psalm "the nightingale". Each word of Psalm 23 is like a sparkling precious pearl, filling all that surround it with light and radiance.

Most probably David wrote this psalm after conquering his enemies, established the rules of his kingdom, and enjoyed rest and security. It speaks in the language of deep experience which none can record but an honourable old man, who has come to know and experience the Lord deeply for many years. He has experienced His goodness in times of triumph and joy as well as in times of defeat and sorrow. He has come to know God's goodness for himself. David must have been recalling his beautiful memories while he was keeping watch over the sheep among running rivers of water in the midst of green pastures.

One who reads Psalms 22 and 24 discovers a great meaning; for Psalm 22 describes the Mount of Calvary, and Psalm 24 describes the Mount of Glory. Psalm 22 begins with the words Christ uttered on the cross: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and ends in saying, "He has done it", or "It is finished!" Psalm 22 is the psalm of the cross.

Psalm 24, however, depicts the triumphant King coming into His kingdom: "Be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is King of glory." It is the psalm of the coming of the kingdom of glory!

In between the two psalms comes Psalm 23, the psalm of the green valley with still waters, where the good shepherd leads His flock, to whom it is the good pleasure of the Father to

give the kingdom!

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The picture of the good shepherd (verses 1-4)
- Second: The picture of a generous Host (verses 5,6)

3.1. First: The Picture of the Good Shepherd

(verses 1-4)

It is the shepherd who supplies all the needs of His people; giving food and drink, restoring the lost, guiding the perplexed, protecting the fearful, and encouraging the weary. The sheep are precious to the shepherd, because He bought them at a huge price, and they are His own cherished flock.

1. **The relationship between the shepherd and His flock is personal:** "The Lord is my shepherd"(verse 1). The Lord is the shepherd and we are the sheep of His pasture. Now sheep are known for their weakness and stupidity. They know how to get lost, but they don't know how to return back, much less protect themselves! The shepherd is everything for the sheep: the provider, the protector and the leader.

David says with all confidence, "The Lord is my shepherd" (verse 1). He did not say, "I hope He is my shepherd", or, "Sometimes He is my shepherd", but "The Lord is my shepherd." It is a statement of an actual, certain and constant fact. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38,39). "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). How beautiful this trust is! There is no fear of rejection from the shepherd, because He loves us. The believer is in the hand of his shepherd always and continually "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Christ said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father...My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:11,14,27,28). No one has the right to say he is of Christ's sheep until he is born again and has become a new creation in Christ, having received a new nature from Him. Everyone who has not received this new nature is described by the Bible as "goats" and "wolves".

Saying "The Lord is my shepherd" shows us the deep experience and total trust of the psalmist. "My shepherd": He is mine, and I am His. He really keeps watch of the whole flock, but the psalmist feels that the shepherd is his alone. He seems to be saying, "I feel Your loving care and concern for me, Lord, as if there is no one on earth who needs Your care but me!" Hasn't the good shepherd said, "For their sakes I sanctify My self" meaning dedicate Myself (John 17:19)? So He is mine. Yes, My beloved is mine!

There is a personal relationship between the shepherd Lord and the following believer, for the Lord is not far away from us. He is love that descended to us and has not kept Himself away from us. The believer says, "The Lord is my shepherd" because the loving God lives in his heart. Jacob, the father of the tribes, called Him, "The God who has fed me all of my life long to this day" (Genesis 48:15).

"The Lord is my shepherd." He is mine. He was mine yesterday, He is mine today, and will continue to take care of me until the end of the age! He is all-loving, all-powerful and all-wise. Not a single day will pass by without Him taking care of me. This sweet care is continual; during the day and by night. During the day He feeds and nourishes, and by night He leads His flock into the fold. It is surrounded by four walls, with only one "door" through which the flock goes in to sleep with the shepherd. Therefore He says, "I am the door" (John 10:9). No sheep leaves the fold without Him knowing it, and no stranger will come in except on His body, for whoever touches His flock touches the apple of His eye. When a sheep is in perfect shape it walks by the side of its shepherd, and when it falls ill the shepherd carries it on his shoulders. The sheep is the centre of continual and unending concern.

- 2. The relationship of the shepherd with His flock is one of provision for all needs:** "I shall not want"(verse 1b). The psalmist lists five things the shepherd provides for the sheep. First: food; he says, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." Second: water; "He leads me beside the still waters." Third: stillness; "still water." Fourth: healing from being lost; "He restores my soul." Fifth: guidance; "He leads me in the paths of righteousness."

"The Lord is my shepherd." The inevitable result of this is that "I shall not want", neither today, nor tomorrow, nor any other day! Moses said to the people about their wandering in the desert, "These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing" (Deuteronomy 2:7). Then he said about the land which they would move to, "a land...in which you will lack nothing" (Deuteronomy 8:9). Sometimes we desire certain things, but in fact we do not need them, so the Lord does not find them necessary enough to give to us. But He always gives us what we need. The thing we desire might cause us harm or hurt us, or perhaps it is less in quality and quantity than what our heavenly Father would give us. Our prayer should be: "Let Your will be done" because we do not know what to pray for as we ought, and He chooses our good portion for us. Certainly we will

lack nothing then. "And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell" (Nehemiah 9:20,21). The believer discovers continually that Christ Himself is his food and water, as Christ gives Himself to him, saying, "He who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (John 6:57). Christ asked His disciples, "When I sent you without money bag, sack and sandals, did you lack anything?" So they said, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35).

"Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. Young lion lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing"(Psalm 34:9,10). "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). He feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies in the fields; how much greater is His own flock!

"He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters"(verse 2). He takes us to the fertile, opulent, plentiful, evergreen pastures; to the word of God that nourishes, satisfies and strengthens; to the still, undisturbed waters. The Lord calms down the waves of the sea before His beloved ones; He leads them to the delights of the Holy Spirit, who gives the soul rest, security and stability. He leads them to perfect peace and glorious joy. He leads us to the still waters that quenches our spiritual thirst, puts an end to it, then flows from us to fill many others. Thus Christ's words are fulfilled in us: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 4:14; 7:37,38).

The responsibility of the believer, however, is to lie down where his shepherd makes him to lie down and wherever He leads him. This means surrender and submission to able, wise and sensible leadership, for no one can lie down unless he is sure, secure and not afraid. All our needs are in Him. The more we surrender to His loving care the more we get released from anxiety and fear, because He is the "door", by whom if anyone enters, he will be saved and find pasture (John 10:9).

Are you inside the Lord's fold? Can you say with assurance, "The Lord is my shepherd"? If you are far come closer to Him, and you will receive care, protection and satisfaction.

- 3. The relationship between the shepherd and the flock makes Him restore the lost:** "He restores my soul"(verse 3a). What a sorry mistake the believer makes when he goes astray from his shepherd! Sheep are known for their stupidity and short-sightedness; they see only a short distance ahead, and depend mainly on hearing. Many a time a sheep would go on a wrong path and all the flock would follow suit without thinking at all. When they come up against a dangerous area they don't know how to turn back! What a

similarity between the believer and the sheep! Both are slow to understand what the Scriptures taught and the goodness they experience in the shepherd. Therefore the evangelistic prophet Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

How often have we walked beside the good shepherd, enjoying His excellent care, lacking nothing, and suddenly we swerve to a way that Solomon describes: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12)!

I wonder what is it that attracted our attention? Have we thought that there is a pasture greener than the one our shepherd led us to? Have we imagined a spot more secure and restful than the spot where He made us to lie down? Have we followed a wrong leadership that led our feet to dangerous, slippery paths without really considering the results of this deviation?

There isn't a reasonable way to account for our deviation from the shepherd; we are inexcusable! But it is really unfortunate that we do go astray from our shepherd!

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me,
And on his shoulder gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me.

The lamb that gets lost sometimes reaches a place where there is another shepherd. The other shepherd would partly slaughter it, leave it for a while until the other shepherd comes and finds it, binds up its wounds, carries it on his shoulders and takes it back where it can get healed. But if a lamb goes too far away from its shepherd, and the shepherd cannot find it soon, the strange shepherd would eat the flesh of that lost lamb! We go astray, but the good shepherd hastens to look for us, and keeps looking for us until He has found us. This is what Jesus reveals to us in the parable of the shepherd who went out looking for the one lost sheep until he found it (Luke 15:1-6). The lost one does not look for his shepherd; it is the shepherd who looks for him, and thus fulfils the written word: "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

Have you had a sweet relationship with the Lord that waned and dwindled? Have you had a remarkable ministry that stopped? Do you lead a life of open rebellion? The Lord wants to restore you to where you have been, to a deeper fellowship, a more successful ministry and more obedience. His desire is to bring you back to the best you have been in. Do not despair; remember where you fell and repent, and go quickly to the fold of your shepherd, saying, "He restores my soul." When you sin He cleanses you; when you

become weak He strengthens you; when you become afraid He reassures you; and when you grieve He comforts you.

- 4. The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep makes Him lead them in straight paths:** "He leads me in the paths of righteousness"(verse 3b). Out of love, the good shepherd not only restores your soul, but also leads you on. Leading has a sense of tenderness and care: "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). He knows that you are prone to stumbling because of your human frailty and because of the devil's temptation. Therefore He leads you in the paths of righteousness where the lame does not stumble and the weak does not fall down.

In winter the roads become muddy, and when wagons travel on them they leave big groves or ruts in them that go up and down. Once they dry up the sheep find it hard to walk in them, so the shepherd picks out an easy road for them, or smooths out the difficult one. This is what our good shepherd does, who leads our feet in the path of righteous. Now righteousness is uprightness, and the paths of righteousness are the upright and straight paths. These paths are many, as many as the ways of ministering to the Lord are. He says of these, "I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in the right paths" (Proverbs 4:11). Which paths will you take to serve the Lord? And in which way will you walk to do His will? God gives the believers many gifts, all of them are upright and must be used fairly. As we walk the paths of righteousness, we give everyone his due; so we give the Lord the obedience, love, trust and tithes that we owe Him, as well as giving others the service and kindness that we owe them. Also we give our souls what we owe them, namely work out our salvation in fear and trembling, receiving the end of our faith- the salvation of our souls, and compete according to the rules, that we may lay hold of the that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of us and saved us (Philippians 3:12).

Many people have no meaning in their lives, and wonder, "Why am I here?" The answer is that you are where you are because God leads you in the paths of righteousness. Seek to know His will and do it, then you will experience the better life which Christ came to grant you (John 10:10).

How much we are grateful to the good shepherd for doing all that "for His name's sake" not for our sake. He names us after Him, and we became His and belong to Him. We have been called Christians after Christ, our great Shepherd, which is our best guarantee. If God was prompted to lead us due to the good in us, he would stop leading us as soon as we stop being good! But we thank Him because His leadership of us never stops, because it is "for His name's sake". And His name is unchangeable!

- 5. The relationship between the shepherd and the flock goes on even in the dark valley:** "Yea, through I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

evil; for You are with me"(verse 4a). The valley of the shadow of death is a very dark valley, in which the good shepherd allows us to walk sometimes. Not all the ways with are green pastures, neither are there still waters the whole time, but in the world we will have tribulation, yet we are sure that Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). "For to you it has been granted in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29). Nevertheless, in the midst of all these troubles, we find His loving care and compassionate heart engulfing us. We do not walk the valley of the shadow of death alone, because the good shepherd is always with us.

The psalmist says, "Though I walk." He does not run in panic and terror, but walks in assurance and peace. When one is terrified he runs, but the one who is confident "walks" deliberately and fearlessly, because he knows his way. He also knows that the way of man is not in himself, and that it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). On the other hand, he is sure that the Lord orders his footsteps. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (Psalm 37:23).

The believer walks in the valley of the shadow of death fearlessly because he knows the end of his way, and because he knows that he is only passing by. After he enters a dark tunnel he goes out into the light of the Lord, trusting that the One who leads him is able to keep what he has committed to Him until that day, because no one can snatch away the believer from the hand of his good shepherd who keeps his safe until he reaches the harbour in peace (2 Timothy 1:12; John 10:28).

But why does the psalmist call it "the valley of the shadow of death"? The answer: The valley is so low. When the sun sets the bottom of it becomes dark, and then the darkness creeps up to the high tops. The valley is very narrow at most places, and hence the expression "the valley of the shadow of death".

Often times we meet difficulties that deprive us from seeing Christ "the sun of righteousness", so we cry out, "How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" (Psalm 13:1,2). He is like the weeping Mary Magdalene, who was unable to see her risen Master because of the tears that filled her eyes! But the psalmist, whose heart is brimming with hope, says, "O My God, my soul is cast down within me? ...I will say to God my Rock, why have You forgotten me? 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 42:6-11).

The believer's heart is calm because he is walking in the valley of the shadow of death, not in the valley of death itself! Inasmuch as the shadow of the lion does not tear someone to pieces, and the shadow of the sword does not wound, likewise the shadow of death does not put to death! It is a mere shadow!

How fortunate we are! The Lord stands beyond our troubles lighting the way, and the dark will soon be dispersed and replaced by the perfect daylight. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Christ, our Good Shepherd, has already crossed the valley of the shadow of death before us, defeated death and the grave, and given us the right to say triumphantly, "O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" We are going to get out of the dark valley, and keep on walking and progressing. We are going to get out from the straits into a broad place, as Elihu said, "Indeed He would have brought you out of dire distress, into a broad place where there is no restraint" (Job 36:16). For this reason the psalmist says, "Let Your mercies come also to me, O Lord- Your salvation according to Your word. So I shall keep Your law continually, for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty for I seek Your precepts" (Psalm 119:41,44,45).

The psalmist goes on to say that he walks slowly and fearlessly in a narrow and dark valley, in the shadow of death, but fears no evil "for You are with me." God said to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage" (Joshua 1:5,6). The company of the good shepherd does not, and will not, ever leave you. He is with you all the days until the end of the age. He is unchangeable; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
With you, dear Lord, beside me:
Your rod and staff my comfort still,
Your cross before to guide me.

"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He has also become my salvation"(Isaiah 12:2). He says to us emphatically, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand...For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" (Isaiah 41:10,13). When the Lord walks by your side He turns the shadow of death into morning: "He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning" (Amos 5:8), so you get out from the shadow of death into the light. "He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings the shadow of death to light" (Job 12:22). Then your heart will overflow with thanksgiving and you will say, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). "I will fear no evil; for You are with me."

No doubt you've noticed that the psalmist spoke of the Lord in the third person: "The Lord is my shepherd...He makes me to lie down...He leads me." Yet no sooner he spoke of the valley of the shadow of death, he switched into the second person as he spoke directly to God, saying, "For You are with me." The psalm follows a descriptive style till it comes to where the writer goes into "the valley of the shadow of death". Then the speech about God turns into a speech to God. The sufferings of life cause us to kneel down in prayer. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus were gloomy and downcast because Christ had been crucified, died, and was buried. As soon as they began talking with Christ, however, the cloud of despair and sorrow lifted, and was replaced by hope and joy. In your time of fear and sorrow, turn from speaking about God to speaking to God, and your heart will be filled with assurance and peace.

6. The relationship between the shepherd and the flock involves using the rod and the staff: "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"(verse 4b).

- 1. The rod and the staff make the flock feel that the shepherd is walking with them:**the sheep fear when they walk through a dark valley because they do not see the way that lies ahead of them, nor the shepherd with them. But out of love, the shepherd wants to reassure the sheep and make them aware of his presence with them, so he stretches out his rod or staff and touches their backs slightly.

Are you aware of the loving touch of the shepherd? He wants you to feel His constant presence with you. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me."

I don't know how His tender and sympathetic touch will make itself felt to you, but you will feel it nevertheless, and you will recognise it from your previous experience and know in the dense darkness that you are in His company.

- 2. The rod and the staff are used to count the sheep:**The fold always had one door, across which the shepherd would put his rod or staff at a low height and let the sheep in. When they pass under the rod he would be counting them, and, at the same time, checking their physical health: whether any of them has a broken limb or a sickness. If he finds any he hurries to give them the necessary first aid. Now if he finds out that one is missing, he goes out into the fields and mountains on which he led his sheep to graze during that day to seek out the missing sheep. He keeps on looking for it till he finds it. The Old Testament speaks of counting by the rod, for we read in Leviticus: "And concerning the tithes of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:32). The prophet Jeremiah says of the Lord, "He is the Maker of all things, and Israel is the tribe [literally: rod] of His inheritance" (10:16). We gather from all this that the rod and the staff were used in counting all the herds a man had. What a reassuring thought it is for the believer to know that his good shepherd knows him and knows his condition by using the rod

and the staff. The Lord has counted all our bones while we were yet in our mothers' wombs: "My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest part of the earth" (Psalm 139:15). "Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?" (Job 31:4). How wonderful is Christ's statement: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke 12:7).

3. **The rod is used for guiding the sheep and maneuvering them around ditches:**When the shepherd sees the foolish sheep straying away from him, he stretches out his rod to bring it back to the path of righteousness, the straight path. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6) but the Lord brings us back to where we should be. This implies that we are dear to Him, and that He counts us precious and valuable in His sight.
4. **The rod chastens the lost:**A sheep can get lost, which does happen very often! Then the shepherd beats that lost sheep to chasten it. "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (Psalm 119:67). Moreover, the shepherd sometimes breaks a leg of the sheep that is accustomed to going astray, and binds up its leg again so that it begins to readapt and stick to the shepherd and stay beside him all time of its brokenness and weakness.

Although the shepherd's chastisement seems painful to us, yet it leads to peace, because we know that whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives (Hebrews 12:6). This is what happens in our daily lives; for if you walk somewhere and hear a little boy uttering some swear words, you usually walk on and pay him no attention. But if you happen to know that it is your son who is using such bad language, surely you will be interested enough to stop and chasten him, out of love for him, because he belongs to you and you care for his good! He is your own, unlike a strange boy who does not concern you at all. It is really comforting to know that our good shepherd is concerned enough to chasten us, for by this we know that we are His.

5. **The rod and the staff urge the sheep on:**We do not count ourselves as having already attained maturity, but we must urge ourselves on in order to do so. The rod and staff of the shepherd urge on to fulfil the Apostolic commandment: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The Christian is like a bicycle rider who can only go forward, because he will fall down if he stops. Therefore we need the encouragement of the rod and the staff that urge us on to where we should be.

6. **The rod and the staff are used for defending the sheep:**The weak and helpless sheep suffer many attacks. A hired shepherd may try to harm them, the thieves will try to snatch them away, and the wolves and wild animals will attack them to prey on them! But a good and alert shepherd will protect them with his rod and staff. The Lord says, "I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease

from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods" (Ezekiel 34:25). The rod of the shepherd strikes the wild beast or the thief that comes to steal. So do not fear, you little flock, for the good shepherd protects you, and no one will attack you to hurt you, for in His rod and staff is perfect protection.

7. **There is a way to use the staff that is different from that of the rod:**The rod has a piece of iron at its end, but the end of the staff is curved, therefore the shepherd uses it to draw out a fallen sheep from the hole into which he fell. The shepherd may hold it by the leg or the neck and pull it up. The sheep must suffer, but its temporary suffering saves it from certain destruction. I wonder if you have gone far and fallen into a hole? Rest secure in the love of the shepherd who uses His rod and staff to protect you, care for you and rescue you.

3.2. Second: The Picture of the Generous Host

(verses 5,6)

David spoke about the Lord as the great and good shepherd, then he moved on to speak of Him as a generous Host, who prepared a table for him.

The hearts of the New Testament believers are filled as they sit around the table of the Lord's Supper, partaking of the elements, realising that the true fulfilment of their lives is in Christ, who said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst...I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:35,51).

As we consider this hospitality we can see the following:

1. **God offers it with His own hand:**How gracious is the hand that gives in love and generosity and does not reproach! In His presence there is fullness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). The psalmist says to the Lord, "You meet him with the blessings of goodness" (Psalm 21:3), and to his fellow believers, "Oh, taste and see, that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:8-10).

How happy is the believer who fills his heart with the banquet of his Lord! God Himself has invited His people to this banquet: "Eat, O friends! Drink" (Song of Solomon 5:1). The King has led us into the banquet house and His banner over us is love. We shall eat of the hidden manna whose eater never hungers, and drink of the spring of living water whose drinker never thirsts.

We will stay in the presence of that great King as guests, until we reach His eternal

kingdom, just as Joseph's tired brothers reached his royal house, where he fed and honoured them even though they had cast him down into a pit! As we walk through the wilderness of this life, we get weary and lie down in exhaustion. The angel of the Lord comes and touches us, offers us food and drink prepared by the hands of the King Himself, and tells us words of encouragement: "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you" (1 Kings 19:7). Blessed are all those who accept the invitation of the generous King and always eat at His spiritual heavenly table!

2. **God protects His guests:**The royal palace is a sanctuary for all those who take refuge in it. It serves the same purpose as "the cities of refuge", where the Mosaic law commanded every accidental manslayer to take refuge until the judges looked into his case and pronounced him innocent. The law specified six cities for refuge which any accidental killer may flee to (Numbers 35:15). When the avengers of blood would come to seek the blood of the killer, and the investigation proved that he did not mean to kill, the judges would sentence him to serve a term in the cities of refuge until the high priest, in whose time the killing happened, dies. When the accidental killer returned to his home town, the folk of the victim could do him no harm.

Now the six cities of refuge were enough when the population was little, but after the population increased, the people had to use the tents of the shepherds as cities of refuge. Whoever kills a person accidentally would flee to a shepherd's tent, where he would find food and safety, while his enemies stand outside the tent unable to kill him. They see each other, but he is a guest at the shepherd, eating his food in safety, and say, in effect, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (verse 5a).

Let us go to Him in repentance, taking refuge with the great King, the generous Host and the Good Shepherd, where we can find forgiveness, safety, satisfaction and protection. He is the refuge that offered the blood, so let us be diligent to praise Him with our hearts and mouths. He is Christ, our Refuge, to whom we run to be safe (Proverbs 18:10). All we like sheep have gone astray, and He carried the iniquity of us all.

Charles Wesley was looking out the window of his room on a very cold and snowy day when a robin rushed in- into Charles Wesley's bosom, all wet and shivering with cold. The famous Christian singer took it and put it closer to the hearth, dried its feathers and made it warm and comfortable. When the storm subsided, he released it.. Wesley saw himself in that robin and wrote down the words of this song:

"Jesus lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly

While the gathering waters roll, while the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my saviour, hide, till the storm of life is past.

Safe into the heaven guide, O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee.
Leave ah, leave me not alone, please support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed, all my help from thee I bring.
Cover my defenceless head with the shadow of thy wing.
Plenteous grace with thee is found, grace to cleanse from every sin.
Let the healing streams abound, make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of thee.
Spring thou up within my heart, rise to all eternity."

3. **God celebrates the victory of His guests:** "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" paints a portrait of a king who won the battle against his enemies, and sat down with the senior men of his country to celebrate the victory around a royal banquet, having tied his enemies to the pillars of the royal palace. The victor eats with his men in the presence of his captured enemies who can't rise against him any more.

In saying "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" it means that God's grace triumphs over our adversary the devil, who prowls around seeking someone to devour. He only devours those who listen and surrender to him. But the person who refuses to be tempted by him gains victory and the Lord grants him the privilege of sitting in His presence, eating of His spiritual table, while his enemies are tied up before him unable to do him any harm.

If you run to God and obey His commandments, He will satisfy you with the abundance of His grace, tie up your enemies so that they can't hurt you, and cast Satan under your feet. If God is for you who can be against you? If an army rises against you, do not fear; feel safe. They won't get at you, or hurt you, because the Lord is your victory and preservation. The Lord Himself will prepare a table in the presence of your enemies and make them unable to hurt you. "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you and no one will attack you to hurt you" (Acts 18:9,10).

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" also means enjoying a banquet of the victorious shepherd, who sometimes shepherded his sheep in green pastures, as well as in lands with serpents hidden in the crevices of the rocks, where his helpless sheep graze. The wise and experienced shepherd would boil water and pour it on the crevices of the rocks to kill the serpents, and allow the sheep to graze in safety, because the shepherd has prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies!

It is a true saying that "he who touches you touches the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8). But the third person in "His eye" may refer to the enemy as well as to God. If it is the first, then it would mean that the enemy who touches us would actually be touching the apple of his own eye, to hurt himself, like an ox that kicks against the goads. The cunning enemy must fall in the ditch which he dug for the beloved of God, even if he is as cunning as serpents. If the third person in "His eye" refers to God, it would mean that whoever touches us touches the apple of God's eye, who is afflicted in all our afflictions, and sends the angel of His presence to save us (Isaiah 63:9). Far be it from the enemy to implement his plans!

How generous God's mercy is! He Himself prepares a table in the presence of our enemies, and renders them powerless to hurt us. When they mean evil to us, He turns the evil into good.

4. **God honours His guests:** "You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over"(verse 5b). This generous Host does not only feed us, but also anoints our heads with oil, and fills our cups till they run over!

1. **Through perfumes:**When a rich and generous man wanted to honour a guest at his table, he would pour aromatic oils onto his head, so the sweet smell would waft over the guest and all those present. Concerning this the psalmist said to the King, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness" (Psalm 45:7). Through this the Host wants to convey to the guest that he is an honorary guest, held dear, loved, and honoured. What an honour God bestows on the believer He loves!

Anointing with oil is a symbol of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. "But you have an anointing from the Holy One" says the Apostle John (1 John 2:20). The condition for receiving this anointing is total surrender to God, for the Lord gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Also we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of every new day, otherwise we can't fulfil our spiritual duties. For this reason we turn to God at the beginning of every new day to anoint our minds and hearts with the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be able to serve Him as we should.

As anointing with aromatic oil prepared the honoured guest for the food, so will the Spirit of God prepare us to recline at the heavenly banquet when Christ comes again to those who love Him.

2. **By filling up his cup as soon as it becomes empty:**Thus the guest's cup remains full all the time. This means that God fills one's needs, and even a bit more. It brings to memory what the Apostle said of God: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

The full cup that runs over is a natural result of our being filled with the Spirit to capacity, for when the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples their cup of joy ran over to the degree that everyone present thought they were drunk. In fact they were not drunk with the wine of the world, but they were filled with the Spirit of God, which made their cup run over with joy over the listeners. As a result, around three thousand people believed that day, and found their eternal salvation in Christ.

5. **God assigns two angels to guard His guest:** "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"(verse 6a). Whoever sits at the King's table will be followed by two guardian angels; namely goodness and mercy. The Jews believed that a true believer always walks in the company of these two guardian angels. There are no greater goodness and mercy than when we walk in the company of the good shepherd, who guides us to the paths of righteousness and walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death all the days of our lives.

The psalmist begins this sentence with the word "surely". It is a word of emphasis. It removes all doubt in the fact that goodness will follow the King's guest, and that mercy will overtake him. What a great difference there is between the state of the King's guest and that of His enemy; for the wicked shall be pursued by the angel of the Lord (Psalm 35:6), and evil will hunt the violent man to overthrow him (Psalm 140:11).

6. **The guest stays in the house of the Lord:** "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"(verse 6b). The generous Host welcomes His guest, who has eaten at His table, to stay in His palace forever. Naturally the spiritual sense is intended, for no man can stay in the place of worship all the days of his life. What is meant here is that the heart of man becomes a temple for the Lord, so that the whole man turns into a living, mobile church, through which people would see Christ and hear the word of God. His entire concern should be the worship of the Lord, so that he may experience what Moses did, whose face shone because he stayed in the presence of the Lord (Exodus 34:30,31). Then God would say, "How precious is Your loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house" (Psalm 36:7,8). Christ said, "A slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever" (John 8:35).

There is another spiritual meaning of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever, which is the blissful eternity a believer enjoys in the Lord's presence. The psalmist has transported us in this last verse from the present world to the one to come, as though we hear the saying: "I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am, there you may be also ...I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:2,3,6). "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

These are also the words of David: "My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol...You will show me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy; at

Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:9-11).

You will enjoy all the blessings of the psalm of the Shepherd, if you say, out of experience, "The Lord is my shepherd." What kind of relationship do you have with Him?

3.3. Questions

1. What are the uses of the rod and staff mentioned in verse 4?
2. How does the host honour his guests?

4. Psalm Twenty-Four

The Coming of the King of Glory

A Psalm of David.

1 The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

2 For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah

King David took the stronghold of the Zion after defeating the Jebusites, not by his own strength, but by God's help. Later the city of Jerusalem was built on that stronghold, and it was called "the City of the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 8:18; 18:7). God, the real owner of the stronghold, was supposed to enter into His city, represented by the ark of the covenant. It was on this happy occasion that David wrote down this psalm.

The ark of the covenant was a box of gold-plated acacia wood, and was one the most sacred things the Jewish temple contained, because it contained the two tablets of the law with the ten commandments carved on them (Exodus 25:16), the golden pot that had some of the manna God fed Israel with during the forty years in the desert of Sinai (Hebrews 9:4), as well

as Aaron's rod that turned green and budded (Numbers 17:10).

The ark was a symbol of God's presence in His temple (Exodus 40:34), His revelations to His people (Exodus 25:22), and His care for them (Numbers 10:11,33). Besides, it was a symbol of atonement, for in the day of atonement Aaron used to sprinkle blood with his fingers seven times on the cover of the ark, first for himself, and then on behalf of the people so that they might be cleansed from all their sins (Leviticus 16:2-19).

The priests of the children of Israel would carry the ark of the covenant during their travelling through the desert of Sinai. When they came into the promised land the ark settled in Gilgal (Joshua 4:19). Later they moved it to a medial place in Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), and to Bethel (Judges 20:18). As the Israelites fell away from worshipping the Lord, the Philistines defeated them and took the ark of the Lord's covenant with them to their capital Ashdod and later to Ekron for seven months. As the Lord continued to plague them they returned the ark to the village of Beth Shemesh on the north-western border of the land of the tribe of Judah (1 Samuel 6). Afterward the ark was moved to the house of Abinadab in the village of Kirjath Jearim where it stayed twenty years (1 Samuel 7). In 1003 BC David took the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites and wanted to move the ark to it on a cart pulled by oxen, although the law stated that it should be carried on the shoulders of the priests. Perhaps David wanted to transfer the ark in a modern way, up to the standards of development of his time, assuming that he was honouring God. God, however, gave him a push in the right direction, as costly this push was, by putting Uzza the son of Abinadab to death when he tried to hold up the ark on the cart as the oxen stumbled (2 Samuel 6). On this account David left the ark in the house of Obed-Edom, which was near the place of the accident. Three months later he returned to move it to the stronghold of Zion in the right way. We learn from this that God wants us to listen to His instructions, not follow our personal preferences, and to steer and adjust our lives in the way He wants (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15).

The ark of the covenant was a symbol of God's presence in the midst of His people. Therefore as the ark came into Jerusalem all the people shouted for joy at the owner of earth and the things on it. Let the gates be lifted up so that "the King of glory" should come in, and let the worshipers be up to their worship:

The psalm includes the following:

- First: God the owner (verses 1,2)
- Second: God the object of worship (verses 3-6)
- Third: God the victor (verses 7-10)

4.1. First: God the Owner (verses 1,2)

1. **God's universal ownership:** "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness"(verse 1). He owns the earth and all that is upon it, whether mankind, birds, beasts, or plants. They are His by virtue of creation, for "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). He ensures the continuation of the universe, for He is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3), and "of Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). For this reason He said, "All the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5), and Moses said to the people, "Heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth and all that is in it" (Deuteronomy 10:14). He owns us and all we have; we are just stewards in charge of the children, finances, time, health, intelligence and educational degrees. No one can say of anything that it is his, because all things belong to the God.
2. **God's ownership is lawful:** "For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters"(verse 2).
 1. **God is Creator:** "He has founded it upon the seas." "God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas"(Genesis 1:9,10). The psalmist also said that He "laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 136:6), and the chief philosopher said of the Lord, "He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command" (Proverbs 8:29).
 2. **God is the upholder and guarantor:** "And established it upon the waters."He created it and He guarantees its continuity. "For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelations 4:11). "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

4.2. Second: God the Object of Worship (verses 3-6)

This great God, who upholds all things, is worthy of our worship. Worshippers should be up to their worship, since worshipping the great God requires us to be humble, and worshipping the holy God requires us to be godly and holy. In these four verses we can find four descriptions of worship:

1. **Worship is a privilege:** "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?"(verse 3). Worship is a privilege because it is "ascension" into the hill of Lord. It is also "standing" in the presence of the Lord in His holy place. Ascension is difficult because it involves climbing up, which requires effort and will-power. On the other hand, standing requires wakefulness, alertness, determination and perseverance. Descending and sitting, however, are easy! Christ said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it...narrow is the gate and

difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13,14).

Spiritual life requires ascension above the level of the world. When Moses prayed to God to give victory to His people against their enemy Amalek he had to hold up his hands to God all the time, because whenever he let his hands down the enemy prevailed! As he grew weary Aaron and Hur came to his aid and propped his hands up, one on one side and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until sunset when his people won victory (Exodus 17:11,12).

2. **Worship is a responsibility:** "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully"(verse 4). David was afraid as He saw God putting Uzza to death because he dared to touch the ark of the covenant with his hands, which was prohibited by the law. David realised the necessity of obedience and harmony with the divine will. So worship is a privilege, as well as a responsibility that requires three things of us:
 1. **Cleanness of outward conduct:** "He who has clean hands"(verse 4a). That means refraining from taking things that are not his own, nor doing violence. He could say, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has recompensed me" (Psalm 18:20).
 2. **Purity of the inward heart:** "And a pure heart"(verse 4b). A pure heart has only good intentions. Christ said of those who have such heart, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).
 3. **Cleanness of thought and speech:** "He who has not lifted up his soul to an idol", nor sworn deceitfully (verse 4c). He is faithful to the Lord; lifting up his hands and directing his thoughts honestly toward heaven, leaving behind useless idols, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and pursuing everything that pleases God. If he swears promises he is always as good as his word, because he who spends his lifetime lying will never enjoy fellowship with a truthful God. Job, our example of patience, described his righteous walk by saying, "If I have walked with falsehood, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in a just balance, that God may know my integrity. If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands, then let me sow, and another eat" (Job 31:5-7).
3. **Worship is a blessing:** "He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation"(verse 5). The Lord blesses a loyal worshipper of Him as He blessed the house of Obed-Edom when the ark of the Lord's covenant stayed in it for three months, so much so that David heard of that abundant blessing. It was such a beautiful statement that Mary said, "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty" (Luke 1:53).

A loyal worshipper will receive righteousness, just as Abraham believed in the Lord and

it was accounted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Christ's statement will also fit him: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

4. **Worship is continual:** "This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face"(verse 6). They seek Him always. He who seeks Him will say, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 122:1). He will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (Psalm 23:6). He who seeks His face seeks Him with all his heart; whether in his place of work, or in a prayer-chamber. This persistent seeker resembles Jacob, the father of the tribes, as he should be, and he is "The Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

So let us seek the Lord and His face always and eagerly. A scientist may spend all his life trying to develop a certain machine to serve mankind better. Will the believer be less zealous? Believers should spend their lives developing and deepening their spiritual lives by seeking the Lord and His face. Then God will bless their lives and make them a blessing to others, as He said to Abraham, "I will bless you...And you shall be a blessing...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:2,3).

4.3. Third: God the Victor

(verses 7-10)

1. **The King comes in in the midst of shouts of welcome:** "Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in"(verse 7). The ark arrived at the gates of Jerusalem, so the psalmist said, "And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!" The gates of the city are too low for the King of glory to come in, so they must be lifted up. Also they must be opened wide to provide enough space for the divine glory. And let all resistance that hinders the entrance of the King of glory be stopped, for He is worthy of perfect welcome. These doors are "everlasting", yet as old as they are the Lord gives them new blessings when they open to the King of glory.

This verse is a prophecy about Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem one Sunday before His resurrection, when the crowds shouted to Him, "Hosanna! [meaning: Save us, we pray] Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9,10).

Today, we must welcome the King of glory to come in and reign over our lives, so that all what we have may become His and at His disposal. Let everyone of us say to himself, "O door of my heart, be lifted up and be wide open for the King of glory to come in. Today I will not leave anything that hinders Christ's entry into my heart."

- 2. The King comes in victoriously:** "Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle"(verse 8). His redeemed people sang to Him a song that says, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." The song ends also with this statement: "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:2,18).

We read in prophecies Psalm 22 about the crucified and resurrected Christ that were written a thousand years before His crucifixion, and all of them were fulfilled. Christ conquered death and left His grave empty. All prophets tasted death, and they will come back to life on the last day to stand before Christ, the just Judge. Christ is the only one who rose from His grave victoriously, left His grave empty, and will come back again to the earth to take up His reign. He is "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." He killed death by His resurrection, and defeated Satan and made a public spectacle of him (Colossians 2:15).

- 3. The King will come in gloriously:**The psalmist repeats his call and question again: "Lift up your heads, O you gates! And lift them up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (verses 9,10). He is not only the victorious King, but also the "Lord of hosts" of whom David said while addressing 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, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45). His hosts are all created beings, as the Bible says after creation, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished" (Genesis 2:1). His host are his chosen people (Exodus 7:14). They are the sun, moon and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3). They are also the angels (Luke 2:13). He is the King of glory, the owner of all authority in heaven and on earth.

Someone may wonder: "How can I enter heaven and appear before God with my hands besmeared with sin?" The answer: "You just put your trust in Christ, the one who has clean and pierced hands, who can give you a new heart. Then you will appear in God's presence joyously, because He will cover all your wrongs and grant you acceptance with God by virtue of His redemption."

Let our heart be wide open to receive His glorious entry, and then we will sing a song of joy as Christ comes into our lives to own them!

4.4. Questions

1. What did the ark of the covenant contain?
2. Explain why worship is a privilege and a responsibility.

5. Psalm Twenty-Five

Teach me and Lead me

A Psalm of David.

1 To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me.

3 Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

4 Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths.

5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.

6 Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving-kindnesses, for they are from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord.

8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

9 The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.

10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

11 For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

12 Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.

13 He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.

14 The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

15 My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

16 Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted.

17 The troubles of my heart have enlarged; bring me out of my distresses!

18 Look on my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.

19 Consider my enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

20 Keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You.

22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all their troubles!

In this psalm the psalmist prays for forgiveness and guidance; he starts it and ends it with a prayer. He is humble and knows that he sinned, and consequently went through difficult circumstances, in which he didn't know how to manage. So finally he turned to God asking

for forgiveness and daily guidance, beseeching Him to show him the truth, and to teach and lead him into it.

How grateful we are to God because he forgives our mistakes in His love, and guides us with His word and Spirit! He is our Father who takes care of us, who has condescended and made us His people who belong to Him. No matter how many our sins are, he forgives them as soon as we confess them. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself or His love for us (2 Timothy 2:13).

This psalm is an alphabetical acrostic; each verse of it begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: Points for prayer (verses 1-7)
- Second: God shows His ways (verses 8-15)
- Third: God delivers from trouble (verses 16-22)

5.1. First: Points for Prayer

(verses 1-7)

1. **Prayer is lifting up one's soul to the Lord:** "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul"(verse 1). Prayer is elevation and exaltation of the soul, because God lifts up the pray-er who kneels down before Him in true humility. When we humble ourselves in His presence He exalts us in due time (1 Peter 5:6). Even if our difficulties and sins have caused us to bow our heads, let us turn to God in prayer so that He may lift us up. Let us hear His advice, "Why is your face downcast?" (Genesis 3:6). Don't let the circumstances make your countenance fall down in anger or despair, but "Lift up your eyes on high" (Isaiah 40:26; 51:6).

Paul said as the Jews accused him falsely, "I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11). He appealed to a higher judge seeking justice. Thus ought we appeal to God, because the more we pray the higher we are lifted up above difficulties. We might complain about our sufferings to our friends, or grumble within ourselves because of them trying to find a solution to our problems. But we soon find out that our minds are deficient and that our friends are inadequate. Let us lift up our souls to the Lord, and direct them into the right direction.

As Christ stood by Lazarus' tomb, Lazarus' body was already rotting, his sisters were weeping, and the Jews observed Him to see what he would do. Christ, however, turned His gaze away from all that, and lifted up His eyes toward heaven, saying, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me" (John

11:41,42). This is how prayer should be! "Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven" (Lamentations 3:41).

2. **An appeal not to let the enemy triumph:** "O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits upon You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause"(verses 2,3). A treacherous enemy sees only the visible things, so he will come to shame and disgrace because he builds his security on the visible material things only. The honest believer, however, will never be ashamed because he believes in God who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; being strengthened in the faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He has promised He is also able to perform (Romans 4:17-20).

The psalmist recognises that even the best people have enemies who rejoice over them in their calamities, but he also recognises the necessity to pray for them. Every believer is afflicted (John 16:33); for whom the Lord loves He chastens (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6), and because our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Moreover, the ruler of this world opposes the believers (John 14:30), and the flesh of the believer lusts against his spirit (Galatians 5:17). Whenever the treacherous enemy looks at the calamities of the believer, he rejoices over him, whether the calamities were the believer's fault or not. The psalmist beseeches God to save him from this triumphant attitude of his oppressor, as David expressed it in the elegy he sang: "The beauty of Israel [that is Saul] in slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath (the Philistine capital), proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon (another chief Philistine city)- lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2 Samuel 1:19,20).

3. **An appeal for guidance:** "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day"(verses 4,5). There are four requests in these two verses:
 1. **"Show me":**Inform me and give me mental knowledge. Tell me of something I don't know. Reveal Your will to me. This knowledge is open to everybody; such as saying, "God is love."
 2. **"Teach me":**Teaching is one step further than showing. When you learn something, you appropriate it to yourself. This is the wise application in your daily life of what you learn from and about God, in such a way that makes these facts real and immediate. So when you say that Christ loves you, you feel secure with this love.
 3. **"Lead me":**Leading takes you one more step further than learning. To be led into something is to practice the knowledge you've learned, make mistakes while applying it, and learn from these mistakes. You know that God is love; you realise that He

loves you; you feel secure with God's love for you. But you fall into the sin of doubt as you run through a hard temptation. The psalmist asks God to lead him so that he could say, "When I fall, I will arise; when I sit in the darkness, the Lord will be a light to me" (Micah 7:8). He learns by trial and error.

4. **"Teach me"**: After practising by trial and error, man learns how to be stronger in faith, and gains more obedience and readiness to serve God. He has now learned things by trial and error that will benefit him in the future, so he won't fall into the same trap as before. Now he can truly say, "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offence toward God and man" (Acts 24:16). He no more needs to be rebuked like those to whom the apostle said, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God (the ABC of the Christian faith)...But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The process of learning needs patience. One learns and makes mistakes, and learns again without despair, repeating along with the psalmist, "On You I wait all the day" (verse 5). If God taught you but you still make mistakes, don't give up. Wait on Him to teach you afresh. Thank Him because He does not let down those who wait on Him. He does not drive away His disciples because of their ignorance, weak memory, slowness of understanding, hard-heartedness or refraining from putting their knowledge into practice. Rather, He teaches and trains them time and time again.

Waiting on the Lord means expecting to receive what we have asked of Him, just as the sick people at the pool of Bethesda expected the water to move in patience and confidence, in agreement with David as he said, "My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him" (Psalm 62:5).

4. **4- An appeal for mercy**: "Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving-kindness, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord"(verses 6,7). When times of trouble come, the believer thinks that God has forgotten him, so he resorts to prayer to remind God! This means that doubt started to prevail over his feelings and shake his confidence, so he appealed to God's unchangeable mercy. It has been from of old and it endures forever (Jeremiah 2:2; 31:3). He appeals to it because he is a sinner, who missed the mark, and because he is a rebel, who revolted against God's laws. Yet he knows that God's rich and tender mercies forgive his previous sins and cast every bad conduct into the depths of the sea: "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 7:19). "You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17). As a result you can hear Him confirming to you: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). David lifted up a prayer asking

for mercy, and after him the penitent thief who was crucified with Jesus prayed, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). We dare not appeal to mercy except out of dependence on God's love, which was demonstrated in the cross.

5.2. Second: God Shows His Ways

(verses 8-15)

1. **Because of His own goodness:** "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way"(verses 8,9). The sinner does not deserve any good thing, but because of God's goodness and grace He condescends to teach the sinner the paths of righteousness despite the fact that he has missed the mark. If the penitent sinner is humble, willing to learn and teachable, then God will guide him and educate him more through mental knowledge and practical training. Then he will know how to worship God in spirit and truth, lead a life that pleases and glorifies God, and comprehend God's good will. If you are at a loss, not knowing God's will concerning something, be sure that God wants to teach it to you. Your desire to know the divine will results from the activity of His Holy Spirit within you, and from your own response to the Holy Spirit's activity inside you. Therefore God will surely grant you this knowledge.
2. **Because of His faithfulness:** "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies"(verse 10). All God's dealings with us prove that his faithfulness to His promises is great, and that His counsels are full of love for all those who abide in His covenant (Genesis 17:2-4) and obey Him (Exodus 19:5). The ark of the covenant was an embodiment of God's covenant with His people (Numbers 10:33). The Mosaic law on "the tablets of stone" was the constitution of the OT (Deuteronomy 9:9). For "the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). God showers us with His mercy and forgives our sins; He showers us with His truth, corrects and guides us. It is through His mercy that "He restores my soul" and through truth "leads me in the paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3). His mercy forgives and His truth guides.
3. **Because of man's frailty:** "For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great"(verse 11). As the psalmist pondered over God's goodness and faithfulness, he discovered his own inadequacy. He then asked for pardon, taking shelter in God's revelation of Himself as being the God of mercy, as Moses had asked before him: "Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance" (Exodus 34:9). The Lord will never refuse the cry of someone asking for pardon, because He forgives the sinner once he confesses.
4. **Because of the desire to know:** "Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show

them His covenant. My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net"(verses 12-15). The net symbolises temptation. The Lord keeps the believers from falling into it, and rushes to rescue them from it. He taught us to pray: "Do not lead us into temptation." We have seen from the start of the psalm that the Lord teaches those who fear Him, and guides them in His ways, which He chooses for them (verse 12). Their response to this is: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). This teaching increases their desire to learn more, because they can see the material prosperity the Lord gives them, and their descendants, as well (verse 13), as He promised Abraham (Genesis 15:7,8), and the rest of His people (Exodus 20:12; Matthew 5:5). Similarly, they see God's spiritual blessings to them, and His secret concern for them, in the fact that He reveals the secrets of His love and the laws of His kingdom and the truthfulness of His covenant (verse 14). He chose them to be His confidants because they are people of pure and simple hearts (Matthew 11:25). The Lord said to Amos, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Abraham is a good example of this, for Lord revealed to him what He was about to do to Sodom (Genesis 18:17). Amos said, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals his secret to his servants the prophets."

Christ said, "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17). Anyone who wants to obey God, God will show him things in His doctrine that the disobedient cannot grasp. For this reason the psalmist always looks up to the Lord, saying, "My eyes are ever toward the Lord" for he is sure He will pluck his feet out of the net (verse 15). The Jews used to call their children "*Elioenai*" (1 Chronicles 3:23) and "*Elihoenai*" (Ezra 8:4), in hopes that their children will live up to their names, having their eyes on the Lord and singing with psalmist, "My eyes are upon the Lord, O God my Lord; in You I take refuge; do not leave my soul destitute" (Psalm 141:8).

5.3. Third: God Delivers from Trouble

(verses 16-18)

1. Sin is the main reason for trouble:

1. **Sin causes inner trouble:** "Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have enlarged"(16,17a). The psalmist prays to God to help him overcome his feelings of loneliness and trouble, and bring him out of his distress by turning Himself to him and not hide His face from him: "For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard" (Psalm 22:24). How often do we feel lonely and afflicted, and say together with David, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (Psalm 27:10).

2. **Sin causes outer troubles:** "Oh, bring me out of my distresses! Look on my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins"(verses 17b,18). The psalmist lists six troubles of the believers: desolation (loneliness), affliction, persecution, distresses, pain and adversity. The psalmist does not grumble about them, nor does he tell the Lord what to do about them. He is satisfied to say, "Look", as the two sisters, Mary and Martha, said to Jesus, "Behold, he whom You love is sick" (John 11:3). They, too, never specified what He should do out of trust in His love and wisdom.

The psalmist recognises that all other troubles that came upon him from his enemies were the result of his own sins, and asks the Lord to forgive sins he committed, because he knows that sin disturbs and troubles the soul. The world cannot trouble us as long as we are in the Lord; but sin can trouble us as it hides His face from us. The enemies cannot give us pain and humiliation; pain and humiliation come always from inside, when a man acts proudly and high-handedly. In so doing he provokes God's anger and causes people to keep away from him because people don't like someone who is only interested in himself.

2. **The enemies cause trouble:** "Consider my enemies, for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred"(verse 19). His sin was the cause of some of the inner and outer troubles that afflicted him, and he asked for forgiveness and help. But some enemies opened hostilities against him simply because of the wickedness of their hearts, not because of anything he did wrong to them. They gathered around him, united against him, and hated him for no reason. So he cried out to the Lord, who teaches us that "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11,12).
3. **Trouble causes one to wait eagerly on the Lord:** "Oh, keep my soul and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me. for I wait for You"(verses 20,21). This is the supplication that Christ taught us: "Do not lead us into temptation." The psalmist was troubled and helpless. He recognised that he himself was, in part, the cause of some of the trouble he has, and that the enemies form the other part. So he prayed for forgiveness and divine assistance, then declared that he was waiting for Lord. in whom he put his trust to relieve, help and rescue him. He knew that his integrity and uprightness were his guarantee of deliverance from trouble, because he dealt with a good and upright God.
4. **Divine redemption is the perfect way out trouble:** "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all their troubles!"(verse 22). It is a comprehensive petition, in which the psalmist lifted up the people who were being tempted, who were struggling, and he would overcome by the grace of the Lord. To redeem means to set free at a price. God the Father pays a ransom, and Jesus Christ redeems us from all iniquity, cleanses us and makes us His own people (Titus 2:13,14). "O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with

Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psalm 130:7,8).

Let us ask the Lord to make us His own people, so that He would show us, teach us and lead us; and then teach us once more when we make mistakes. He forgives all our sins, and redeems His own people from all their troubles.

5.4. Questions

1. The psalmist prays, "Show me", "teach me", "lead me", and "teach me". How are these petitions related?
2. God shows his ways to us for four reasons. List them.

6. Psalm Twenty-Six

A Complaint to the Divine Court

A Psalm of David.

1 Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip.

2 Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart.

3 For Your loving-kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth.

4 I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites.

5 I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.

6 I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about Your altar, O Lord,

7 That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works.

8 Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells.

9 Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men,

10 In whose hands is a sinister scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes.

11 But as for me, I will walk in my integrity; Redeem me and be merciful to me.

12 My foot stands in an even place; in the congregations I will bless the Lord.

In this psalm David had to defend himself before God's court, although he was wronged by his wicked enemies. He compares his righteous walk with their unrighteous one. The occasion on which David wrote down this psalm is not known for certain. Perhaps he wrote the day the daughters of Israel sang that Saul killed his thousands but David killed his ten

thousands (1 Samuel 18:7,8). The song was not objectively wrong, because it was David who slew Goliath. But Saul took it personally and decided to kill David.

These false accusations, however, never daunted David, because he knew how to find his inner peace by turning to the divine court. Christ, the Son of David, faced the same experience David faced; He was wronged and ill-treated without any legitimate claim. He taught us that everyone who lives with Him will face the same troubles, saying, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18,19; see also Matthew 5:10-12). But if we turn to the divine legislation we will say with Paul, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The innocent complainant (verses 1-3)
- Second: The complainant is godly (verses 4-8)
- Third: The complainant asks (verses 9-11)
- Fourth: The complainant is sure of exoneration (verse 12)

6.1. First: The Innocent Complainant

(verses 1-3)

1. **The innocent complainant pleads for divine justice:** "Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip"(verse 1). The psalmist is sure of his innocence, so he asks the Lord to prove his innocence publicly, which he had already asked in Psalm 7:8. "I have walked in my integrity." He walked earnestly and confidently, because he was sincere in his intents, clear-cut in his goals, and whole-hearted in his worship. He knew where he came from and where he was going to, so he went on toward the goal without ceasing, intrepidly and fearlessly. He trusted the Lord and will not slip. His feeling of integrity was not due to spiritual pride, but a fact that he used to defend himself in a certain situation and in a special case. David's judgement of himself was true, for his heart was after the Lord's own heart (Acts 13:22). God said to Solomon, "Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgements, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father" (1 Kings 9:4,5).

The first verse teaches us that we should lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of us, and press on to reach Him earnestly, confidently and ceaselessly, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are

ahead (Philippians 3:12,13), and laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us without slipping (Hebrews 12:1), saying together with Paul, who was falsely accused by the Corinthians of not being an Apostle, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed [hard pressed by persecutions, but not giving up his ministry to God]; we are perplexed, but not in despair [not knowing how to escape the troubles, but not losing hope in God's guidance, deliverance and power to open new doors for preaching]; persecuted, but not forsaken [persecuted by men, but not forsaken by God]; struck down, but not destroyed [struck down by flogging, but rising up again to preach]- always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body [suffering like Christ, but Christ lives in him]" (2 Corinthians 4:7-10 [Brackets are ours]). How beautiful it is to be praised by your own conscience and say, "If I regard any iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

2. **The innocent complainant appeals to divine testing:** "examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart"(verse 2). The Lord knew David, who had said to Him, "You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried my and have found nothing" (Psalm 17:3). But out of confidence in his innocence he tells the Lord to test him again! There were three kinds of testing: testing by smell, testing by touch, and testing by fire. David asks that these three tests be carried out on him, as the Lord did with Abraham (Genesis 22:1), and Israel (Deuteronomy 8:2,16) to give each one according to his ways (Jeremiah 17:10). Each and every believer has to ask the Lord to let him pass through these three tests to be separate from evil and dedicated to the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:14-18):
 1. **"Examine me":**Test me thoroughly and know what is inside me, for I have the sweet aroma of Christ. Probe me like someone tasting food to see that I am palatable.
 2. **"Prove me":**Place me on the scales of Your justice, to manifest the genuineness of my faith and intent.
 3. **"Try my mind and my heart":**These are the centres of emotions and feelings. "Bring the secret things of my heart out to the light" he says, "to see if there is any wicked way in me, weed out the weeds, and make me holy wheat which You can store at Your barn."
3. **The innocent complainant takes refuge in divine loving-kindness:** "For Your loving-kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth"(verse 3). David asked the Lord to test him because he was sure of God's loving-kindness, which he had experienced in the past, still sees in the present, and is sure he will see in the future. He saw it manifest in His creation of and care for the grass, the birds, the animals and human beings. He heard of His loving-kindness, which was made manifest in redeeming Isaac with a ram, then in the Mosaic law, which has set up the ordinance of atonement through

animals. Perhaps it was through the spirit of prophecy that he foresaw the coming of the Son of David, who would establish an everlasting redemption, because He is the lamb of God who takes away all the sin of the world (John 1:29). He truly said, "I have walked in Your truth", because the will of God was the constitution of his life, and the word of God controlled him, but he was in a continual need for God's loving-kindness.

6.2. Second: The Complainant is Godly

(verses 4-8)

The complainant pleads in a godly manner, negatively and positively.

1. **Negatively:**He avoided certain things and hated the ways of the wicked: "I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites. I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked" (verses 4,5). "I have not sat" -in the present perfect tense- "and will not sit" today or tomorrow "with idolatrous mortals" who are empty-headed, liars, dishonest and misled. Thus David's life had the qualities of the blessed man, as he himself put them in Psalm 1, and he also obtained what Jeremiah said afterwards (Jeremiah 15:17).

He says that he will not go into the houses of "the hypocrites", who dishonestly "speak peace to their neighbours, but evil is in their hearts" (Psalm 28:3). Thus he was right in saying, "I have walked in my integrity" (verse 1). Believers must live in the midst of the world without being of the world, because we cannot keep away from the world. Otherwise we would have to get out of it (1 Corinthians 5:10). Christ said, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

2. **Positively:**He did certain things that prove his godliness: "I will wash my hands in innocence; so I will go about Your altar, O Lord, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells" (verses 6-8).
 1. **"I will wash":**Just as the priest used to wash to be ritually clean before offering the sacrifice (Exodus 30:17-21), as the elders of Israel used to declare themselves innocent of the blood of a victim whose murderer was unknown by washing their hands (Deuteronomy 21:6), and as Pilate absolved himself of Christ's blood by washing his hands (Matthew 27:24). This why we pray, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity...Wash me and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:2,7).
 2. **"I will go about Your altar":**He assumes his place among the worshippers who go about God's altar. He is continually in the Lord's presence, always worshipping Him.
 3. **"That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving":**He sings unto the Lord an old and a new song.

4. **"And tell of all Your wondrous works":** He testifies to the people of how good God is to him, and of the many miracles He performed to deliver him.
5. **"I have loved the habitation of Your house":** Where God dwells in the midst of His people (Exodus 25:8,9), and where the ark of the covenant is, which symbolises the Lord, the heart moves toward sanctity and hope is animated again in the worried, tense and sad soul. There one rests in the fellowship of believers.

6.3. Third: The Complainant Asks

(verses 9-11)

The psalm asks the Lord to keep him away from the walk and destiny of evildoers. This request is in keeping with his past and present life, as well his expectation of God:

1. **A request in keeping with his past:** "Do not gather my soul together with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands is a sinister scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes"(verses 9,10). In his past life he kept away from the wicked because "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). He never had anything to do with the bloodthirsty men, who practice violence, scheme to murder and do it, taking the life of innocent men; whose right hands are full of vice, who cook up evil schemes and accept bribes to twists the judgement, ignoring that "fire will consume the tents of bribery" (Job 15:34). Truly, "what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14,15).
2. **A request in keeping with his present:** "But as for me, I walk in my integrity"(verse 11a). He proceeds forward, continuing the walk which he began with the Lord, and of which he said earlier, "I have walked in my integrity" (verse 1).
3. **A request in keeping with his expectation:** "Redeem me and be merciful to me"(verse 11b). He never claims to be perfect, but asks for redemption and mercy to stay away from the path of the wicked. If we were granted David's request, we would say, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2).

6.4. Fourth: The Complainant is Sure of an Answer

(verse 12)

"My foot stands in an even place; in the congregation I will bless the Lord."

A person with true faith trusts that God answered his prayer even before the answer is in evidence, and rests secure. The psalmist no longer stands on rocky and thorny ground,

because the Lord has smoothed out his path for him, so that he could say with assurance, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!" (Zechariah 4:7). David stood in fertile plain, because the Lord heard his prayer and granted him security. Therefore he says, "In the congregation I will bless the Lord", and testifies before all that He was with him, had mercy on him and saved him.

6.5. Questions

1. What are the three divine tests the psalmist asked for in verse 2?
2. The psalmist did five things to prove his godliness. Name them.

7. Psalm Twenty-Seven

The Lord is my Light and my Salvation

A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

3 Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident.

4 One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

5 For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.

6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

8 When You said, "Seek My face", my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."

9 Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.

11 Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.

12 Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence.

13 I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.

14 Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!

How many times have we repeated this psalm and were filled with confidence, because the Lord is our light and salvation and the strength of our lives. It isn't known exactly when David wrote this psalm, because it expresses different difficult situations he went through, and he could have written it in any one of them. If we have David's faith let us sing this psalm as our real experience, because all our lives testify that the Lord is our light, our salvation and the strength of our lives.

There are two major and important subjects in this psalm; the first is a praise-song of joy in which he expresses his confidence and the longings of his heart, and the second is a prayer. This shows us the pre-eminent status of praise and prayer in the believer's life. We thank and ask. We often speak about God more than with Him. We often tell the people about Him more than we tell Him about the people, although the two situations are equally important and necessary.

The first three verses of the psalm spell out the believer's confidence and the longing of his heart, while in the remaining verses he prays asking for God's deliverance. This means that the believer's deliverance and confidence should not lead him to complacency or apathy, but urge him all the more to pray and appeal to the tender mercies of the Lord. The believer's deliverance does not mean that he should quit turning to the Lord, but rather take shelter in him and seek him all the more.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The believer's confidence (verses 1-3)
- Second: The believer's petition (verses 4-6)
- Third: The believer's prayer (verses 7-14)

7.1. First: The Believer's Confidence

(verse 1-3)

If the Lord is on the believer's side then he should not be afraid, because "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The psalmist introduces in the first three verses of his psalm three reasons for confidence:

1. **The psalmist is confident because of his God:** He repeats the name of the Lord six times in the first half of the psalm, and seven times in the second, describing God with three descriptions:
 1. **The Lord is his light:** "The Lord is my light"(verse 1a). When David sang this song he was living in the darkness of his enemies' hatred, but he knew that God is light and

in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). Christ said, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). The Earth was darkness when God issued His first command: "Let there be light" and there was light. Similarly, our lives are dark without God, until Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines upon us with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). For "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

It was said of David that he was the lamp of Israel (2 Samuel 21:17), a simile meaning that he was like the light of the moon that reflects the light of the sun. "You the light of the world", Christ said to His followers (Matthew 5:14). When the Lord is your light, when you walk in His light, and when His lights radiate through you, the darkness of your confusion, anxiety and dangerous situations will be dispersed, and your life will be full of joy.

2. **The Lord is his salvation:** "The Lord is...my salvation"(verse 1b). He Himself is the Saviour, and the giver of salvation. In our spiritual childhood we are interested more in His gifts, but as we mature spiritually He Himself becomes the object of our interest, and say together with Paul, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation'" (Isaiah 12:2).
3. **The Lord is the strength of his life:** "The Lord is the strength of my life"(verse 1c). "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). To Him we say, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Psalm 18:2). "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2).
2. **He is confident on account of his past experiences:** "When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell"(verse 2). He was surrounded with dangers, as Job said to his friends who were fierce beasts, "Why do you persecute me...and are not satisfied with my flesh?" (Job 19:22). David must have recalled here how a lion and a bear attacked his flock, which he killed and then he gave all the credit to God (1 Samuel 17:37). He must have also recalled Goliath, the giant who was armed to the teeth, like a moving castle, whom he killed by a small pebble shot from a sling (1 Samuel 17:49). And finally, Saul his enemy fell on his own sword and died (1 Samuel 31:4). So it was out of experience that he said, "My enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell." Confidence in one's deliverance comes from experience, and the believer's life is rich in experiences similar to those of David, in which God delivered him from all evil work.
3. **He is confident because of his trust:** "Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident"(verse 3). David was subject to wars on all sides: Saul and his hordes hounded him, and the neighbouring countries waged war against him as soon as he was enthroned king. But in

all these wars he was confident and fearless because of his faith in the Lord and His promises. All the armies of the world do not frighten the believer because the Commander of the army of the Lord comes to his help (Joshua 5:14), and the Lord hides him (Jeremiah 36:26), so that he says, "You are my hiding place" (Psalm 32:7). From his past experiences the psalmist learned to trust that God will be with him in the future, because He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Happy is the man who can say that God is his God, the God of his father, and the God of his grandfather. He has a rich heritage on which he can build his present and his future.

Open your eyes to see the One who is unseen. May you be like Elisha's servant whose eyes the Lord opened to see that those who were with him were more than those against him (2 Kings 6:15-17). "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

7.2. Second: The Believer's Petition

(verse 4-6)

David seeks to be a guest at the Lord's house eternally, to speak with Him, meditate on His goodness, fill himself from His table, and take refuge in His house. All these blessings begin the house of the Lord here on earth.

1. **A whole-hearted petition:** "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I will seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple"(verse 4). "One thing is needed" (Luke 10:42). Too many goals distract a person and keep him shallow. Therefore David seeks to behold the beauty and glory of the Lord, for then He would shine upon him with pleasure, his soul would be illuminated by the heavenly light, and he would be filled with the desire to be a son in God's family, "members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever" (John 8:35). David yearns to worship the Most High God in His temple, speaking with God in his prayer for himself as well as for others, and telling people about God in his preaching, teaching and psalms.

As David fled before his son Absalom and became a fugitive in the wilderness of Judah, he must have longed to relax in his palace and eat and drink with contentment among his servants. But his greater longing was to worship in the house of God; hence he said, "My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1). This is the expression of a heart devoted to God's love, attracted by the beauty of God's holiness, love and justice. It shouts out loud, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" (Zechariah 9:17 KJV), and repeats what it desires: "To behold", and "To inquire." He first takes a general glance, and then begins to look more closely. He ponders on the Lord more and more, and his heart is so absorbed in God's word that he starts to meditate, or rather feed, on it till it has its fill. "My soul

longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Psalm 84:1,2). He experiences what Jesus said, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:21,23).

2. **A petition of someone who is indebted to God:** "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me"(verse 5). In this verse we can see the psalmist's description of God's cheering work:

1. **"He shall hide me"** from the enemies who run after me, so that their wickedness won't harm me. The king's pavilion used to be set up in the midst of the encampment, guarded closely, and the king would safely direct the battle from this hiding place. So did the Lord to the psalmist.
2. **"He shall hide me"** and cover me with the precious garment of redemption, so that He should not see my imperfections, but only the blood of atonement that covers all my sins.
3. **"He shall set me high"** upon a rock, taking me higher with Him to great spiritual dimensions in His love. The rock stands for steadfastness and endurance, for it is a "rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

Oh, how do we need these three blessings in order to experience through them God's continual and faithful watch over us!

3. **A petition that confesses Him in public:** "And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord"(verse 6). When he won the victory he first thought of the One who gave him victory. He did not think of throwing a party to celebrate his triumph, but thanked God with joyful singing because He led him in triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14). We bow down our head from humiliation, fear or shame, but God removes the cause of humiliation and dishonour, takes away our fear and blots out of shame. He glorifies the one who inquires in His temple, and gives confidence to the one who hides in his pavilion, and covers the imperfections of whoever takes shelter in His redemption, so that we would be able to hold our heads high. "Therefore let us continually offer the sacrifices of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

Here David confesses the Lord's favour to him in public, and declares his confidence that "my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me." He expresses his thanksgiving, "I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle"; and his praise, "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."

7.3. Third: The Believer's Prayer

(verse 7-14)

After the joyful singing the psalmist turns to prayer, since a soldier should not neglect his weapons, for the weapon of the believer is praise and prayer. Here are six descriptions of the psalmist's prayer:

1. **A prayer of a humble man:** "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy upon me, and answer me"(verse 7). In all humility and without any pride he calls upon the Lord, falling back on His mercy, because he in himself is unworthy. All he has is the divine grace. He depends on the divine tender mercies in times of prosperity and joy as well in times of failure and tears. God's mercy is the sinner's hope and the believer's refuge.
2. **A prayer of someone who is required to pray:** "When You said, 'Seek My face', my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'"(verse 8). God calls us for prayer, so we are not intruding into His presence. The psalmist heard the command and answered, as Jeremiah said, "Indeed we do come to You, for You are the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 3:22). God called the boy Samuel in the temple three times, and the high priest understood that the Lord was calling the boy, and taught him how to answer Him: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9). Similarly, Christ commanded us: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7-9).
3. **A prayer of someone who has hope:** "Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation"(verse 9). The prayer will not be answered, even if we are seeking His face, as long as his face is hidden from us. Knowing this, the psalmist pleads with God to be pleased with him; for He is unchangeable, who has been his help in the past, and will not hide His face from His servant: "For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; but when He cried to Him, He heard" (Psalm 22:24). God cannot be an unjust judge and disappoint the hope of his servant I His anger and wrath. He cannot leave the believer, whom he loves, without delivering, rescuing and saving him. Solomon, the epitome of wisdom, said in the prayer for the temple's inauguration, "May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us" (1 Kings 8:57). Let us remember the Lord's previous goodness to us, and ask Him to always be with us, because He is the God of our salvation. David saw how the Lord was so angry with Saul that he removed his kingdom from him, and could not bear to arouse God's anger, since he needed His help.

The psalmist expresses to his hope in the Lord by saying that "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (verse 10). This verse is actually

in the perfect tense. David had taken his parents to live with the king of Moab, left them there, and we hear of them afterwards (1 Samuel 22:3,4). He took care of them after they had taken care of him, because they became dependent on his care. Nevertheless, he stresses that God's love and pity for him are stronger than all the love he experienced in his parents' house. If you are going through circumstances like his, remember Christ's promise: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

4. **A prayer of someone who is submitted to God's will:** "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence"(verses 11,12). This petition brings out the psalmist's humility, desire to know, willingness to obey and need for someone to guide him. He wants to walk in God's path, no matter the difficulties that lie ahead of him because of his enemies, who spread maligning tales about him, bear false witness against him, rise up against him, and breath out violence and threats (Acts 9:1). Yet, he is not going to give up nor compromise his principles; he won't make any mistake that gives them the chance to stain his good reputation. They twist his way and fill it with ditches, but he is submitted to God's will, and seeks His divine help to carry out His good will.
5. **A prayer of someone who is waiting:** "I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!"(verses 13,14). The psalmist was positive he was going to see the goodness of the Lord here on earth before seeing it in heaven. For this reason he encourages both himself and his fellow-believers to wait on the Lord, who does not delay his help and succor. This way the believers' hearts cheer up and are filled with strength. Here we see the faith that reproves despair!

Many times a child from the Sunday School would knock at the door of our house, which is annexed to the church. When we are a little late to answer he goes away because he can't wait! He is in a hurry! We often do the same thing with God. If we want to receive a blessing from God, let us wait patiently on the Lord. Christ told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of God, which He gave them (Acts 1:4). So they waited for ten days. This time of waiting was not boring for them, nor was it a time of collective laziness and inactivity, for the disciples used the time of waiting to be more intimate with one another, get reconciled and remove all negativity from their hearts. They were waiting for the Lord and His blessing, preparing their hearts to receive it.

Dear believers, pray and wait for the Lord's blessing. Pray more than you complain. Pray without ceasing and at all times. Wait on your good God and don't be in a hurry. Wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from Him, and thank Him by saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom

shall I be afraid?"

7.4. Questions

1. In verse 1 the psalmist mentions three things that give him confidence. what are they?
2. In verse 5 the psalmist mentions three things God does for him. List them and give a brief comment on each.

8. Psalm Twenty-Eight

A Prayer

A Psalm of David.

1 To You I will cry, O Lord my Rock: do not be silent to me, lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

3 Do not take me away with the wicked and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbours, but evil is in their hearts.

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours; give them according to the work of their hands; render to them what they deserve.

5 Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them and not build them up.

6 Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications!

7 The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.

8 The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed.

9 Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever.

This psalm is a prayer that the psalmist begins by asking the Lord to listen to him and rescue him from the destiny of the wicked. Then he offers his thanks because God answered his prayer, or because he is sure God is going to answer it, and concludes his psalm with a prayer for God's people, because he feels the oneness of believers everywhere. This teaches us to feel for one another, and to pray for one another (James 5:16).

The occasion of writing this psalm is not known, because evidently the psalmist was in great danger, perhaps a pestilence, which almost brought his life to an early end, and he feared that he would face the destiny of the wicked. This is why he asks the Lord to protect him because

of his godliness, because God's justice destroys the wicked and rescues the righteous.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The pray-er asks for himself (verses 1-5)
- Second: The pray-er thanks God (verses 6,7)
- Third: The pray-er asks on behalf of God's people (verses 8,9)

8.1. First: The Pray-er Asks for Himself

(verse 1-5)

The psalmist turns to God because he knows Him. He ascribes to Him three qualities, and ascribes three qualities to himself. He uses four ways to express his needs, and asks two requests from God.

1. The qualities of the God of the pray-er:

1. **He is the Master:** "O Lord"(verse 1a). He is the sovereign Master of heaven and earth. He alone can do all things, and everything is under His control. We may complain of our troubles to others hundreds of times, but these complaints will amount to nothing more than release and won't really help. Yet, when we turn to the Lord we address the Master of the universe and of our lives, in whose hand is the king's heart, like rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes (Proverbs 21:1).
2. **He is the Rock:** "O...my Rock"(verse 1b). There is no variation with Him or shadow of turning. His authority is eternal and everlasting. He is strong and steadfast, unlike the loose sands. He is a rock that overshadows all those who take shelter under Him: "A man will be a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32:2).
3. **He is holy:** "I will lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary"(verse 2c). The Holy One lives in the Holy of Holies, dwelling in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). He commits no mistakes, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). "Sanctuary" comes from Latin sanctus and refers to the most holy part of the temple. The psalmist lifts up his hands toward the holy temple of the Lord, where the ark of the covenant is, which represents God's presence in the midst of His people.

2. The qualities of the one who prays:

1. **Afraid:** "I will cry...lest, if You are silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit"(verse 1c). He is afraid that God is going to lend him a deaf ear, afraid of going down to the pit of the grave and Sheol. Most probably he saw the people all around him falling down under the epidemic and was afraid to face the same destiny.

- He was threatened by something, and needed to hear a word of encouragement: "It is I" (Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20).
2. **Has a sense of belonging:** He calls God "my Rock" (verse 1b). There is a personal relationship between him and the Lord, therefore he calls upon Him with confidence, because he is the Lord's and the Lord is his: "My beloved is mine and I am his" (Song of Solomon 2:16). He did not stay afraid because God adopted him and he was no longer lonely. He says to his brethren with joy, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!" (1 John 3:1). It is your natural right to call your Father when you are in need. "When you said, 'Seek my face', my heart said to you, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'" (Psalm 27:8).
 3. **Waiting:** "Do not be silent to me"(1b). He already knows that God is his rock, and that He is not deaf, so he asks Him confidently to listen to him and not be silent. Only sin makes God's ear heavy, that it cannot hear (Isaiah 59:1). Therefore he expects Him to answer. He seems to be so weary, to say to God, "Do not be silent." He knows that reproaches a Father who loves him and cares for him, who will never forsake him "lest...I become like those who go down to the pit."
3. **The pray-er's expression of himself:**
1. **Crying:** "I will cry"(verse 1). The one who is relaxed speaks, but the one who is weary cries. Crying is always a sign of much weariness, and shows one's inability to cope. We usually cry when our logic doesn't work: when we are unable to analyse things and get down to the causes: when we fall short of helping ourselves. Crying also means we are turning to someone stronger and depending on him. As the child cries and asks his mother to help him, so the weak creature cries to his powerful Creator, and the helpless sinner to his mighty Saviour.
 2. **Supplication:** "hear the voice of my supplication"(verse 2a). Supplication is a sign of humbleness and submission to God, coupled with a sense of unworthiness. It is a sign of a need that no one else can meet except the one we are supplicating. We would not so much as raise our eyes to heaven, but beat our breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13).
 3. **Appealing for help:** "I cry to You"(verse 2b). Hebrew uses two different words for "cry" in verse 1 and verse 2. Here it is a cry for help or succor. One cries for help when he is surrounded by danger, unable to run away from it; when he is drowning and in need for succor. The impending disaster is enormous, and he is unable to cope with it both from within and without. Therefore he cries out. Such an appeal for help also implies trust- he appeals for the help of someone who is able to do so, and not disappoint him.
 4. **Lifting up his hands:** "I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary"(verse 2c). Lifting up one's hands means lifting up one's heart in prayer. It indicates that one has

taken hands off of the world and self-dependency, directed himself heaven-ward, lost himself in the Lord only, and in alert expectation of coming divine assistance. When the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites, Moses lifted up his hands in prayer. The people of God prevailed whenever his hands were up, but whenever he lowered his hands the Amalekites prevailed. As Moses arms grew tired, however, they seated him on a rock, and Aaron and Hur propped up his hands so that the people would continue to prevail (see Exodus 17:11-13). When Solomon had the temple of the Lord erected, he prayed for a blessing and "spread out his hands toward heaven" (1 Kings 8:22). So let us lift up toward the mercy-seat empty hands, needing to be filled, seeking help, knowing that God does not let down anyone who cries out to, supplicates and appeals to his help.

4. The pray-er's requests:

1. **A request to be delivered from the destiny of the wicked:** "Do not take me away with the wicked and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbours, but evil is in their hearts"(verse 3). God takes the wicked away to the pit of the grave and perdition, just as an executioner takes criminals away to be executed; their end is destruction. They are like a stone that falls to the ground. The psalmist does not want to meet the same destiny, because he is different from them, therefore he calls out, "Do not gather my soul together with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men" (Psalm 26:9).

He calls them "wicked", in the sense that they have overstepped the bounds that God had assigned them. Again he calls them "workers of iniquity", in the sense that their behaviour is perverted and warped. He says they are dishonest and hypocritical who "speak peace to their neighbours, but evil is in their hearts." Their hearts are evil; their works are evil; their tongues are evil; and their destiny cannot be any different!

2. **A request to have the wicked punished:** "Give to them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours; give to them according to the work of their hands; render to them what they deserve"(verse 4). This request may not be as vindictive as we think; it may be a prayer to the just judge to administer justice by punishing the wicked according to his deed, and inflicting punishment upon those with evil hearts and works and tongues, who deserve it. Reason, conscience and divine revelation teach us that the wicked must be punished. This is exactly what the psalmist asks for in this text, because God "is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). This request, however, is not in keeping with the Spirit of Christ, who calls men to repentance and bids them return from their wickedness to live.

The psalmist accounts for this request for punishment by saying, "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, he shall destroy

them and not build them up" (verse 5). He does not say, "Punish them because they have offended me", but "punish them because they have not regarded Your works, O Lord." Naturally they will fall and be destroyed, never to be built up again. When a rock falls from a high place, it must reach the bottom and be smashed to pieces. This is gravity! Likewise, when a man separates himself from God he is left with neither building nor watchmen; he is sure to be destroyed. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

8.2. Second: The Pray-er Thanks God

(verse 6,7)

Perhaps the psalmist wrote these two verses after the Lord had answered him, for thanksgiving must follow the answered prayer. Perhaps also he lifted up thanksgiving even before he got the answer, trusting that it will undoubtedly come!

1. **Thanks for the answer:** "Blessed be the Lord, for He has heard the voice of my supplication"(verse 6). "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalm 103:1). God sometimes gives the pray-er what he asks for, but he more often gives him much more and much better things than what he asks or thinks. In prayer the Holy Spirit intercedes with us, because we don't know how we ought to pray, so the Holy Spirit prays within us to improve our requests and answer them in a better way (Romans 8:26). One ought to express gratitude to whoever renders him a good deed, and thank him for it.
2. **Thanks for past help:** "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped"(verse 7a). The Lord is both the strength and the source of the believer's strength. He strengthens him by His person, as well His gifts. He empowers him on the inside as He promised, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8), so that he would bear trials and sufferings, and overcome the evil temptations. You always find the believers who live through trials stronger than those who watch them from afar off, as was the case with the three men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25).

The psalmist says, "The Lord is my shield." This is outward strength. The shield is a piece of wood covered with leather, which the warrior holds to ward off arrows. God may send us a man to defend us. He may remind us in times of distress of encouraging words we could have forgotten or overlooked, and thereby help us. But there is always the shield of faith with which we will be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16). Yes, there is a defence against every offence, and against every temptation, because in God's love for the believer there is strength and protection.

3. **Thanks for the coming help:** "Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I

will praise Him"(verse 7b). The heart rejoices and will continue rejoicing, because the Lord has answered and will continue answering. The believer, therefore, thanks Him for what has happened, and for what is going to happen. God has secured the past, and will secure the future, too.

You hold my future in my hands;
You yourself guarantee it.
I thank You for what is to come,
For in You I trust.

8.3. Third: The Pray-er Asks on Behalf of God's People

(verse 7,9)

After praying for himself, the psalmist prays for the people of the Lord, which we should always do, according to the Apostle's commandment: "Pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16). In these two verses we see two things:

1. **The psalmist's trust in the Lord:** "The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving refuge of His anointed"(verse 8). The Lord is the strength of His people just as He is the strength and shield of the psalmist (verse 7). It is an indisputable truth, for God's strength helps His people and subjugates the enemy; it saves the believers and destroys the sinners: it always deserves our admiration! "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace" (Psalm 29:11). "O Lord, be gracious to us; we have waited for you. Be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble", His people responds (Isaiah 33:2). The Lord is the saving refuge of His anointed, who might be the king whom God anointed over His people, the priest whom He anointed to tell the people about the Lord and tell the Lord about the people, or a prophet who brings a special message to the people from God. God supports and preserves the king, the priest and whomever He commissions to do His ministry.
2. **The psalmist's requests:** "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance; shepherd them also, and bear them up forever"(verse 9). There are four requests in this verse:
 1. **"Save Your people":**The psalmist does not use the normal imperative form, but the intensive one in Hebrew; he asks for complete salvation from sickness through health (Luke 8:36), from hunger through filling (Psalm 36:6), from the enemies through deliverance (Psalm 27:1-3), and from sin through forgiveness (Luke 19:10) and sanctification (Philippians 2:12,13). When a believer's life ends here on earth, God will complete his salvation by admitting him into the joy of his Master (Romans 13:11). The psalmist asks the request on behalf of God's people, trusting in the answer, because they are "Your people". The psalmist brings in this argument to

support his request, because he knows that the Lord takes care of His sheep as a good shepherd would naturally do.

2. **"Bless Your inheritance"**: He asks for blessing in the broadest sense of the word, a blessing that meets all physical, spiritual, mental, social and emotional needs, because they are "Your inheritance", who are so dear and valuable to Him that He cannot replace them by any other!
3. **"Shepherd them"**: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!" (Psalm 80:1). "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). He shepherds at all ages, and meets all needs. "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).
4. **"Bear them up forever"**: God has born His people up in the desert of Sinai till they reached the Promised Land, so that Moses said to the people, "In the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place" (Deuteronomy 1:31). God knew their form and inadequacy, and lead them through the wilderness of hunger, thirst and peril, until His word was fulfilled: "As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the Lord alone led him" (Deuteronomy 32:11,12a). The imagery is taken from the life of an eagle as it teaches its young how to take wing and fly for the first time; it stirs up the nest, the young jump into the air and get exposed to danger, since they don't know yet how to fly. Then the eagle rushes to carry them on his huge wings lest they should fall. He brings them back to the nest, and does the whole thing all over again until they learn how to fly. By analogy, God trains us to fly, but carries us in order not to expose us to danger. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9).

Let us lift up these four requests for ourselves and for the rest of God's people: Save, bless, shepherd, and bear up, because we are Your people and Your dear inheritance.

8.4. Questions

1. In verse 1 the psalmist describes himself in three ways. Mention them.
2. In verse 9 the psalmist asked four things for his people. What are they?

9. Psalm Twenty-Nine

The Voice of the Lord

A Psalm of David.

- 1 Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, give unto the Lord glory and strength.**
- 2 Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**
- 3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters.**
- 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.**
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon.**
- 6 He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.**
- 7 The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire.**
- 8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.**
- 9 The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth, and strips the forests bare; and in His temple everyone says, "Glory!"**
- 10 The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever.**
- 11 The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.**

This psalm is called "the voice of the Lord" because this expression repeats itself seven times in the psalm. One time in each of verse 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9; and two times in verse 4. Number seven is the number of perfection. All a naturalist sees in a thunderstorm is a natural phenomenon, and all an ordinary man sees in it is mighty power, yet the believer sees in it the voice of God, "The Most High uttered His voice, hailstone and coals of fire" (Psalm 18:13). Thunder also represents God's punishment, as Anna said in her prayer, "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them" (1 Samuel 2:10).

This psalm describes a thunderstorm, coming from the north, sweeping everything before it till it reaches the desert of Kadesh in the south, leaving behind devastation and destruction. Perhaps this psalm was written during the time when the Israelites asked for a king to reign over them, and God gave them Saul. Samuel the prophet, however, was not pleased with it, and said that they made a big mistake by asking for a king, because their true king is God. Perhaps he also said that even though the country was not used to a thunderstorm in the month of May, the month of the harvest, yet a terrible thunderstorm was going to come upon them in that time of the year, so that the people might understand how angry God was against them (1 Samuel 12:17,18). Storms, thunderbolts and lightning came, so that the people were very much afraid, and admitted they made a mistake by seeking a human king. Maybe David recalled this untimely thunderstorm, and gave it this wonderful description, because he sees God behind everything and explains every natural and supernatural phenomenon as divine intervention: God is the sovereign ruler. If the storm comes, it is "The voice of the

Lord...over the waters" (verse 3). If thunder comes, then "the God of glory thunders" (verse 3). If lightning comes, then "The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire" (verse 7). If the flood comes, then "The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King for ever" (verse 10). God is the mighty King, whose loud voice disturbs those who are far away from Him, yet reassures His little children. For the believer also rests in safety as the voice of the Lord comes low and softly, as it came to Elijah. "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8). Fathers and mother comprehend this: the child sleeps in a room adjacent to the parents' room, and as he cries his father's or mother's voice comes to him from the other room, so he feels secure and rests in peace.

When one reads Psalm 8 in the night-time, as the skies twinkle with stars, he cannot help saying, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3,4). When one reads Psalm 19 during the daytime, as the sun is in the middle of the sky, he cannot help saying, "In them he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit is to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat" (Psalm 19:4-6). When one reads Psalm 29, however, at the time when nature rages with thunderstorms and thunderbolts streak across the skyline, one sees the mighty God in the background, in control of everything, saying, "Rest secure; 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: An invitation to the sons of God (verses 1,2)
- Second: The voice of the Lord in the storm (verses 3-9)
- Third: The mighty God blesses His people (verses 10,11)

9.1. First: An Invitation to the Sons of God

(verses 1,2)

1. **The guests:**Right at the beginning of the psalm David elevates our thoughts from earth to heaven, and calls "the sons of God" to glorify God. The Masoretic text indeed has "sons of God" instead of "mighty ones", but at any rate the guest whom David invites could have been the important people and the sovereign rulers of the earth, or the angels who stand before God's throne. He calls them to praise the glorious, mighty God who shows His glory and might through the storm, the lightning, the thunder and the heavy rain. He tells them three times to "give unto the Lord" (verses 1,2). Let them lift up your eyes on high and see! He directs their sight on every occasion to God, because the world around them, as well as the devil, directs them to the earthly things. Satan was not ashamed to tempt Christ with three temptations to distract His eyes from God's plan. "Command that

these stones be bread", he said to Christ. The stones must have been smooth and round enough to remind one of his hunger. The devil was beating on the physical need. But Christ looked up and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:3,4). He emphasised the reality of the spiritual need, which all the people of God are encouraged to do.

2. **The offerings to the guests:**

1. **"Give unto the Lord...glory and strength"** (verse 1). Does the Lord need to receive glory from us, or does He need strength? The psalmist, however, means that we should have things in our lives that show God's strength at work in us. I wonder what the world would know about God's strength if it sees "the sons of God" defeated by sin and anxiety! Won't it presume that the God of the weak must also be weak? If He were strong, wouldn't He rescue them?! Let us, therefore, give unto God glory and strength, and lead a triumphant life so that all could see God's strength in us.
2. **"Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name"** (verse 2a). Giving glory to the Lord means using the intellect, the heart, the hand and the tongue to glorify Him. "The glory due to His name" is the glory through which he reveals Himself to the world, in nature and His holy word, and above all in the living and incarnate Word. In the first Christian century people were saying, "Look how the Christians love one another!" This was a demonstration of their love for God to the world that was evident in their love for His children (1 John 5:1-2). So let us give unto the Lord the glory due to His name by showing His unlimited love, forgiveness, and power in our walk, as we pray, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory" (Matthew 6:13). This means that you manifest Jesus the King to the world by glorifying His name through your walk, then He will use you to show the world His power through the power of His peace within you. When you go through difficult situations the people will find the power of His grace at work within you, and glorify Your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). They see in you an example of the life that the grace of God has transformed.
3. **"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"** (verse 2b). Let our lives be holy as we worship the holy Lord. Let holiness be our beauty. "Give to the Lord, O kindreds of peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength...worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:7-9). The Apostle Peter wrote to the women about "the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:4). We go to church in suitable clothes, with outward ornaments, but we should also have inner ornaments that suit worship; our hearts should glow with joy because we are guests invited by the Lord to His house: "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:26). At this point the joy of the Lord will truly be your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Put a smile on your face, and let the splendor of worship show! Let your hearts overflow with thanksgiving because the grace of Jesus has

visited us, saved us, transformed us and made us a new creation.

9.2. Second: The Voice of the Lord in the Storm

(verses 3-9)

The psalmist describes the thunderstorm that is coming from far off (verses 3,4), and then describes it as it reaches its tremendous momentum and breaks the cedars and shakes the mountains (verses 5-7), and finally he describes it as it heads toward the south, to the wilderness of Kadesh (verses 8,9).

1. The thunderstorm starts, coming from afar off(verses 3,4).

The storm declared that God speaks through it: "The voice of the Lord is over the waters" (verse 3a). Dark clouds skid across the sky as the waters of the sea rush over land, because the storm is coming! "When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens: And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Jeremiah 10:13). "The God of glory thunders" (verse 3b). Thunders have begun! Yet the psalmist recognises that God is behind all that. He is above the clouds. "The Lord is over many waters" (verse 3c). Heavy rain will come down, but the Lord is higher above it all. "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" (verse 4). The thunderstorm has reached the land in all its majestic power!

The voice of the Lord denotes His presence, activity, laws and power. Wherever His voice is, there is authority and activity. Moses said of the Ten Commandments, "And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words but saw no form; you only heard a voice...from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice" (Deuteronomy 4:12; 5:22). "Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines, and so confused them that they were overcome by Israel" (1 Samuel 7:10). As for the voice of the Holy Spirit, it convicts the world of committing sin, of lack of righteousness, and of the judgement that is coming upon all who refuse the spirit of Christ, who leads people to repentance (John 16:8).

2. The thunderstorm and the tremendous effect of its momentum(verses 5-7)

1. **Its effect on the strongest trees:** "The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf"(verses 5,6a). The cedars of Lebanon are known to be of the strongest and most durable wood; they are called "The cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up" (Isaiah 2:13). The thunderstorm, however, was so fierce that it uprooted these high trees and felled them down "like a calf" sprawled on the green turf.
2. **Its effect on the highest mountains:** "Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox"(verse 6b). Lebanon and Sirion are the main mountains in the Levant. Sirion is the

towering mountain of Hermon, which is topped with white snow, which the vehement storm made skip like a young wild ox! The towering and steadfast mountain lost its balance, because it was terrified before the face of the Lord.

3. **Its effect on all the land:** "The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire"(verse 7). This is descriptive of the lightning. Scientists say it is more powerful as a source of light than the sun, that it gives off enough energy to weld metals, that it is more powerful than the magnetic field of the earth, and that it can paralyze even huge animals. But how great is the power of the voice of God's grace that appeared bringing salvation to all men. It teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, and look for the second coming of Christ (Titus 2:11-13). Charles Spurgeon said that depicting the lightning that "divides the flames of fire" is reminiscent of the Pentecost when divided tongues as fire descended upon the disciples (Acts 2:2,3). The people gazed at the strange faces that had been afraid but became filled with assurance, which had been in hiding but stood in public, announcing with much force that Jesus Christ had risen. The hard hearts of their audience broke and were filled with awe, and around three thousand souls were saved. Sinners stood before God in defiance, but as the power of the Holy Spirit came, the hard hearts gave in and bowed before Him in submission.

3. **The thunderstorm reaches its end**(verses 8,9)

1. **Its effect on the desert:** "The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh"(verse 8). The storm went as far as the southern border of the country, to the desert of Kadesh, near Edom, and was ineffective as far as the dwelling-place of the psalmist was concerned. But its effect in the south was just as great.
2. **Its effect on the animals:** "The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth"(verse 9a). It is a known fact that deer are so swift, so fearful, and so hard to give birth. But as the strong storm approached, the deer were in such a fright that they ran for all they were worth and in doing so, gave premature birth.
3. **Its effect on the forests:** "The voice of the Lord...strips the forests bare"(verse 9b). The storm came upon the forests, so thick and wild, and removed the trees away, and all the sharp rock underneath appeared. In the spiritual realm, God's voice stripped Adam, who had been laid bare by sin, unable to cover himself. Then God covered him out of His love by His redemption and atonement.
4. **Its effect on the believers:** "And in His temple everyone says, 'Glory!'"(verse 9c). His temple here is none other than nature that proclaims His glory, as well as heaven and earth. The storm has subsided after the heavy rains poured down, and everyone shouted in praise of Him. David moved from thinking of the tabernacle of meeting, from the holy place and the Most Holy, to a bigger and more comprehensive temple:

The whole earth where "everyone says, 'Glory!'" to the Almighty who is invested with full authority. God has built the temple of nature and universe to glorify Him. This calls us, too, to glorify Him.

9.3. Third: The Almighty God Blesses His People

(verses 10,11)

1. **He blesses them with His completed work:** "The Lord sat enthroned on the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever"(verse 10). God has declared His authority through the storm, completed the work and sat down, just as Christ has completed His redemptive work, after having Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). The word he uses here for "flood" occurs only in Genesis 6-11 referring to the Flood of Noah. "But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgement" (Psalm 9:7). He is the King who has reigned from of old and will reign forever more, for there is no end to His dominion: He alone has full authority. He guided Noah to build an ark before the Flood came, then sent the Flood and quelled it, drawing a beautiful rainbow across the sky.

The psalmist must have recalled God's mercy to Noah, and those who shared his faith with him, as he described the violent storm, as well as the punishment of God that fell on those who disobeyed Him. He saw God's great authority in the mercy that delivers and the justice that punishes. The wrath of man praises Him (Psalm 76:10). "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet" (Judges 14:14).

2. **He blesses them with strength:** "The Lord will give strength to His people"(verse 11a). The Lord strengthens His people during the horrible storm that breaks the strong cedars of Lebanon, fells them down to the ground, and makes Mount Hermon skip like a wild ox, so that they should not be filled with fear or anxiety. Christ says to them, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your good Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Again He says, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). He sent them the Holy Spirit and fulfilled His promise: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8). This is an active, dynamic power that gives us victory over sin and urges us to be witnesses.
3. **He blesses them with peace:** "The Lord will bless His people with peace"(verse 11b). Only the far-away sinner fears the authority of this Almighty God, whom the angels praise, who sat and will sit to control all His cosmos; but as for His children, they have peace through His power and glory. When you have an unsolvable problem lift up your face to Him and say, "O Lord, I will wait for You till I see how You are going to solve this one." Then He will come to you in His unique way to rescue you. It was God who delivered Noah from the Flood, Moses from Pharaoh, Daniel from the den of lions, and

Peter from prison. Not a single time have His children been faced with a problem that was not solved. Not a single time has He abandoned His little flock: He is always upon His throne, caring for every and each one of His children. We today realise that we have the peace of Christ in the midst of the most violent of storms, as He said to His disciples in the ship that was tormented by the waves in the middle of the sea, "It is I; do not be afraid" (See Matthew 14:22-33). Again He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you...let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). This peace does not derive from circumstances, but it is a gift from God in spite of the circumstances, because it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is when we receive Him into our heart that we obtain the promise: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

9.4. Questions

1. The psalmist mentions three things the guests should offer. Mention them.
2. Verses 10,11 tell about three things God blesses his people with. List them.

10. Psalm Thirty

Those who were Mourning now Dance

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the house of David.

1 I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

2 O Lord my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me.

3 O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

4 Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

6 Now in my prosperity I said, "I shall never be moved."

7 Lord, by Your favour You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled.

8 I cried out to You, O Lord; and to the Lord I made supplication:

9 "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your truth?"

10 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord, be my helper!"

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me

with gladness,

12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

The reason this psalm was written has something to do with David's decision to take a census of the people (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21). The census was not wrong in itself; God ordered the children of Israel to be numbered (Exodus 30:12) and Moses took census of the people three times at least. It was rather the reason for which David numbered the people that was wrong. I wonder if he wanted to boast over the abundance of his subjects? Or wanted to raise a bigger army with more armament in order to wage a new war? Or simply wanted to levy new taxes on the people?

However the motive, the census was not according to the Lord's will. Joab, the commander of the army, perceived that it was wrong to take such a census, not for religious purposes, but for political and military reasons. Joab was a military and political person. Perhaps he was afraid of an uprising against the king, so he tried to dissuade him from implementing it. David insisted, however, and Joab and his men had to go out and carry out his orders. When it was over and David knew the result, his conscience began to bother him so that he said, "I have sinned!" The prophet Gad came and demanded that he to choose between three punishments: "Three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of the enemies overtaking you, or else for three days the sword of the Lord-the plague in the land" (1 Chronicles 21:12). (NB 2 Samuel 24:13 says that the punishment of famine was seven years, because the chronicler in 2 Samuel counts three years of famine that came over the Israelites because of the Gibeonites and three more years which are mentioned here. In order for the harvest to come a whole year must elapse. So they were seven years in all. There is no discrepancy between the account of 2 Samuel 24 and that of 1 Chronicles 21; the former simply combined the two punishments).

David was baffled and in pain, not knowing which punishment to choose. He finally said, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man" (2 Samuel 24:14). In times of famine man falls into the hand of merchants and importers; in times of war he falls into the hand of the enemies; but in times of sickness he falls into the hand of the Lord!

The destroying angel came to kill. The killing lasted from morning till evening, when it was time for the evening sacrifice. David's heart broke, and his spirit was crushed as he saw the destroying angel. He began to say, "Lord, this people has not sinned. If someone must be punished, let it be me and my father's house."

Seeing David's penitence the Lord commanded the angel to stop destroying the people, and the plague ceased at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. David decided to build an altar there and offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thereupon Ornan offered David the

threshing implements for wood, the oxen for burnt offerings and the wheat for grain offering. But David insisted on paying the price of all these things, and this piece of land became the building site on which king Solomon erected the temple (1 Chronicles 21:15-26), hence the title of our psalm: A song at the dedication of the house of David. On that day the offering that covered the sins of the people and of David was lifted up, and on the same day the site was inaugurated to be the house of the Lord. This is the reason the Israelites sang this psalm on the day they inaugurated the second temple (Ezra 6:16). The Israelites also fell into the habit of singing it when they inaugurated their own houses.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The psalmist thanks God for deliverance (verses 1-3)
- Second: The psalmist calls the godly for singing (verses 4,5)
- Third: The psalmist corrects his course (verses 6,7)
- Fourth: The psalmist asks for mercy (verses 8-10)
- Fifth: The psalmist is answered (verses 11,12)

10.1. First: The Psalmist Thanks God for Deliverance

(verses 1-3)

David saw the destroying angel with the sword drawn in his hand, and experienced God's mercy, so he thanked God for deliverance. He mentioned two things he did, and five things the Lord did:

1. What David did to the Lord:

1. **He extolled the Lord:** "I will extol You"(verse 1a). He offered glory to the Lord and bowed down before him, as if saying, "You are the true King; the crown on my head was given to me by You, and all I have is a gift of your love. I return all the glory back to you." Exalting the Lord was the subject of the people's singing after the exodus (Exodus 15), as well as the subject of the praise of those who were delivered from death: "O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt you, I will praise Your name, for you have done wonderful things" (Isaiah 25:1), and the subject of Mary's thanksgiving: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46,47).
2. **He cried out to the Lord:** "I cried out to You"(verse 2a). He found out that the free gift of grace is nothing apart from the Giver, therefore he cried out to the Giver of grace.

2. What the Lord did for David:

1. **He lifted him up:** "You have lifted me up"(verse 1b). He drew him out like a bucket

- from a well, as in Exodus 2:16,19. It was as though David was saying, "You let down a bucket into my well, and drew me out. I was drowned, dead, and You rescued me." He was in a deep pit, like a well or a hole or a grave, and the Lord lifted him up.
2. **He has not let his enemies rejoice over him:** "And have not let my foes rejoice over me"(verse 1c). Had the enemies heard what became of him they would have gloated over him and asked, "Where is his God? He surely has punished him because he is a sinner." When King Saul died, and this news reached the Philistines, David said, "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon-lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2 Samuel 1:20). Gath was the political capital of the Philistines, and Ashkelon was their economic metropolis. Saul died as a result of his disobedience, but the Lord kept David from the gloating of his enemies because he repented.
 3. **He healed him:** "You have healed me"(verse 2b). King Hezekiah said when God healed him, "O Lord, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so You will restore me and make me live. Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth" (Isaiah 38:16-19). As though he was saying, "You did not drop me into a grave, because those who are in the grave cannot praise you. Because You granted me life, I will praise You today, and I will tell the next generation about You." David's experience was the same as Hezekiah's.
 4. **He brought him up from Sheol:** "You have brought my soul up from the grave"(verse 3a). "He also brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Psalm 40:2). "He has...exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:52,53). "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:8). He exalted him as He did Joseph when He brought him out of the pit and made him Egypt's prime minister! He still brings the believer out of the pit of sin, the cesspool of despair, and the abyss of fear and anxiety, only to shout out loud, "Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5,6).
 5. **He kept him alive:** "You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit"(verse 3b). He should have perished and gone down to the grave. He was as good as dead, but God granted him life. Jeremy Taylor says, "God who in mercy and wisdom governs the world, would never had suffered so many sadnesses, and have sent them especially to the most virtuous and the wisest men, but that He intends that they should be the seminary of thought, the nursery of virtue, the exercise of wisdom, the trial of patience, the venturing for a crown, and the gate of glory."

10.2. Second: The Psalmist Calls the Godly for Singing

(verses 4,5)

After thanking the Lord, David called all the people to share in singing with him. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem were delivered, so they should sing with him a song of praise.

1. **The theme of the song:** "Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name"(verse 4). This song contains thanksgiving to God for His holiness of character, attributes and works. It also contains a continual remembrance of this holiness, and a declaration of the desire to obey the loving God. Believers should always remember that God is holy, and that He punishes them when they sin to purify them, as the psalmist said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (Psalm 119:67). "The Lord has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death" (Psalm 118:18). This holy God creates within us the desire to obey him and the willingness to do his good will. As we sing we call his holiness to remembrance and try to conform to it and adapt our actions to be in accordance with it, out of obedience to the divine command: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2), and Christ's command: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).
2. **The occasion of the song:** "For His anger is but for a moment, His favour is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"(verse 5). David chose to fall into the hands of the Lord and get the punishment of a three-day plague, refusing any other punishment, for the anger of the Lord is but for a moment. He knew that his transgression was great, but God's pardon was greater because He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin (Exodus 34:6,7). Weeping endures for a night, but the night does not last long, and the light of daybreak must defeat the darkness of the night. Then those who weep will sing for joy and gratefulness, when they experience the fulfilment of the Lord's promise: "'For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,' says the Lord, your Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:7,8). Christ's promise also will be fulfilled with them, "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy" (John 16:20). They will say, "When I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me" (Micah 7:8).

10.3. Third: The Psalmist Corrects his Course

(verses 6,7)

1. **The wrong direction:** "Now in my prosperity I said, 'I shall never be moved.' Lord, by Your favour You have made my mountain stand strong"(verses 6,7a). David had captured

the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites, which was a very protected place nine hundred meters above sea level, and captured also the city of Jerusalem which was built on five strong rocky hills. He fortified all of them enough, so that it became an excellent location as military fortifications go. So he said in the prosperity of the triumphant, "I shall never be moved." God has given him the fortified city, and helped him fortify it even more. It seems that as soon as this was done he took the gift but forgot the Giver. He might have thought himself invulnerable because of his army between two great kingdoms- Babylon in the north, and Egypt in the south.

2. **The right direction:** "You hid Your face, and I was troubled"(verse 7b). The Hebrew uses *nivhal*, meaning terrified or amazed. David learned from the punishment of the plague that strength and protection come from the Lord alone. He realised who God was, and knew his own value and size. He thought that his destiny was up to himself, and felt secure and prosperous, but he found out that his security [*Üelev* in Hebrew] was in the Lord. What is a great city against a plague? Where are the military entrenchments? Where is the great army? Where is the people he numbered to recruit a bigger army? When the Lord hid his face, he was terrified despite all the material and military prosperity!

Each of us should learn this: When we are prosperous we often forget the Lord. When the affairs of our life are well we think that we have become secure. We pray in times of trouble, but as soon as it goes by we relax and revert to complacency. But all the money we have in the bank, our educational degree, health, friends and family influence are nothing without God's favour and love. Without these we become terrified. We may be in total prosperity before learning this lesson, because we are depending on God's gifts. But once we learn it we realise how much we are in need of the person of the Lord Himself, the Giver of the gifts.

10.4. Fourth: The Psalmist Asks for Mercy

(verses 8-10)

David thanked God for sparing him the divine punishment, and called his people to join him in thanksgiving. He declared that he corrected his wrong course and turned to God, seeking His mercy. God's mercy and love are the permanent refuge and the door that is never shut for the prayerful believer. Even if the Lord chastens us, He does so to correct our course. "He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole" (Job 5:18). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6). "Come, and 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). He learned from terror that prayer was the source of his strength, and his prayer was:

1. **Incessant:** "I cried out to you, O Lord; and to the Lord I made supplication"(verse 8). This was continual crying out and incessant supplication. He was forced by the

punishment he got for numbering the people to resort to incessant prayer (1 Chronicles 21:16,17).

2. **Sincere:** "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your truth"(verse 9). These are the words of King Hezekiah in (Isaiah 38:18,19). The Jews' knowledge of life after death was not sufficient. The Old Testament did not give its readers a clear vision of immortality; it was only Christ who enlightened life and immortality through the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

Perhaps the psalmist meant something similar to Paul's puzzlement by his question: "What I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:22-24). Will he choose death, which is far better? Or choose life to serve the believers? He chooses to live and be poured out on the sacrifice of the faith of the believers and offer God the service required of him.

3. **Reverent:** "Hear, O Lord, and have mercy on me; Lord, be my helper"(verse 10). King David kneels down before the King of kings who granted him this earthly kingdom. With all humility he asks for mercy and help. This is a prayer every believer can lift up, whether he be a preacher, someone writhing in pain on his sickbed or someone in grief, stricken by worries. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

10.5. Fifth: The Psalmist is Answered

(verses 11,12)

1. **The psalmist rejoices:** "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent"(verses 11,12a). The psalmist lamented when he was punished; he slapped himself and beat his chest in sorrow. But as the Lord removed the punishment from him, he began to dance for joy. He was clothed in sackcloth (a cloth of hair worn by someone in mourning under his clothes as a sign of defeat and humiliation), but as the Lord removed sorrow from him, he dressed himself with a sash to dance for exultation. His soul (glory) rejoiced and could not keep silent any more. When the Lord shows mercy to his people, their souls rejoice from within, because He clothes them with a garment of joy from without, and says, "To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3). "To the end that my glory [spirit] may sing praise to You and not be silent."
2. **The psalmist repeats his thanksgiving:** "O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever"(verse 12b). The psalmist repeats his thanks, and promises the Lord to keep this

thankfulness forever, here on earth, as long as he lives, and there in heaven before the throne of the great God. "And there shall be no more curse...They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelations 22:3-5).

10.6. Questions

1. In verses 1-3 David mentions what he did for god and what God did for him. List these deeds.
2. How does David say God answered him (verses 11,12)?

11. Quiz

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

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