

Salvation and Satisfaction

Psalms 62 and 63.

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The special character of Psalm 62 is more easily discerned if we observe that one word — "only" — occurs in it no less than six times. In our Authorized Version this is a little obscured since the word, "truly," is used in verse 1, and "surely," in verse 9. If any of our readers are able to consult *Young's Literal Translation*, they will see how strikingly the word marks the Psalm. If they cannot, at least they can for these two words substitute the word "only" in their minds, and so catch the idea.

We shall then see that no less than four times does the Psalmist express his confidence and hope in God *only* (ver. 1, 2, 5, 6). In verses 4 and 9 he exposes fallen man, and expresses his distrust in him, because he is only set for the downfall of what is good, and hence he himself, whether of low degree or of high degree, is only vanity and a lie.

We shall also see that this trust in God only, to the exclusion of every other hope, is the way of salvation, and also the *basis* of the assurance of salvation. While, on the other hand, this distrust of man since in him there is only evil, to the exclusion of all good, brings us face to face with our *need* of salvation, shutting us up to God.

Verses 2 and 6 are almost identical. The only difference is in one word, "greatly," which is introduced in verse 2 to modify the statement. In the earlier verse the Psalmist speaks with a certain hesitancy, or at least with extreme caution. He is not going to say more than he is absolutely assured of. He is sure that he will not be greatly moved — moved a little, perhaps; but greatly, No. Many of us, without a doubt, have been just like the Psalmist in this respect. Our trust has been in God, indeed in God alone; and yet we could not *altogether* forget ourselves. Hence an element of uncertainty remained in our minds. We hated the self-confident spirit. We felt sure, in a way; but we did not wish to speak too confidently. We believed and hoped that all was well; but we did not feel inclined to go beyond), "I shall not be greatly moved."

The fact is we remembered only too well earlier experiences when we were filled with self-confidence, when we were amongst the wicked of the world and feared nothing. We remembered too how all our fancied security collapsed like a house of cards, and we were terribly moved. Once bitten, twice shy. So we felt very reluctant to invite being let down again.

Now the Psalmist had had just such an experience, or at least he had seen it in connection with others - that is, if we may assume that David was also the writer of Psalm 10. In that Psalm "the wicked" is described. He shuts God out of all his thoughts, which is the exact opposite of trusting exclusively in God. He is marked by cursing, deceit and fraud; he is the persecutor of the poor. He declares that God has not seen his sin, or that if He has, He does not mind and will never require it of his hand. And so with the utmost assurance he says in his heart, "I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity" (Ps. 10: 6). Before the end of that Psalm is reached however we find that he *is* moved. The God whom he contemns seeks out his wickedness, and breaks his arm, and destroys him out of the land. He is not only moved, but removed in judgment. His boasted security turns out to be a lie.

Psalm 62 corroborates all this. Proud, boastful men, who delight in lies, prove to be nothing but a lie themselves. Once lay hold of the fact that each of us, if we view ourselves simply as men in the

flesh, are only that, and all our confidence in man, or in self, is gone. We turn to God and to God alone.

The Psalmist is very emphatic on this point. His soul waited upon God alone. Literally, it is that his salvation came from Him, and that He, and no one else, was his Rock and his Tower of defence. This being so, we might take it for granted that he was in a place of absolute security and of full assurance.

However it was not so! And some of us can look back to a time when it was not so with ourselves. We believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; we had faith in His blood, and in nothing else; we surely ought to have been marked by the full assurance of faith, but we were not. We did not get away from ourselves, and our experiences of earlier days. How glibly once we said, "I shall not be moved!" yet we were sadly moved. We will not repeat that folly, since our earlier expectations came to nothing.

Now it is just at that point that we discover a difference between verse 5 and verse 1. Not only does he exhort his soul to wait only upon God, instead of asserting that he was doing so, but he states now that his *expectation* is from Him. It is not that he has any doubt of his salvation being from Him, for verse 1 states that plainly. But it is very possible to be quite clear that salvation is of the Lord while still cherishing expectations which have their centre in ourselves.

"My expectation is from Him." How great a secret of spiritual liberty and blessing is wrapped up in those simple words. True believers may be found who have a good deal of expectation from the flesh, just as Peter had when he so confidently announced his readiness to go with his Master to prison and to death. Having confidence in the flesh they have expectation from the flesh. Both the confidence and the expectation are utterly wrong, for when Christians are described according to their proper character, we read, "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3: 3). But we do not learn the true character of the flesh in a day. We may humbly accept what Scripture says as to its badness, but even so we are not exempted from an experimental *proving* of its badness until we say with Paul, "*I know* [and not merely, *I believe*] that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing."

Most of us know that in our flesh there is a great deal of evil. But if that were all there might still be a little bit of good, and upon that little bit we might base certain expectations. But the truth is that in the flesh good is totally absent. The fairest thing it produces is vitiated by selfishness and sin. If we have really learned its character, we shall have no expectation of sweet water ever proceeding from that fountain, nothing but bitter. With that lesson well-learned, all our expectations of good will centre in God. And we shall not then be disappointed.

Let us join with the Psalmist, and each of us call upon our soul to wait in silence, or rest peacefully, upon God alone, basing all our expectations on Him. Then He only, to the exclusion of all else, will prove Himself to be all that we need — our Rock, our Salvation, our High Fortress. Each of us will then be able to say with the full assurance of faith, "I shall not be moved." The soul that finds all its expectation, as well as its salvation, in God is in an impregnable position. All that is then needed is indicated in verse 8 — to trust in Him at all times, to pour out the heart before Him in every emergency, and He proves Himself to be a Refuge.

Salvation, and the assurance of it, however blessed in itself, is not an end, but a means to an end. The end is that God may possess Himself of the soul that is saved, and that the saved soul may possess itself of God. Psalm 63 is a fore-shadowing of this, tracing out more particularly the experiences of the soul in its seekings after God. The keynote of Psalm 62, struck in the first verse, is, *My soul waiteth only upon God*. The keynote of 63, also struck in the first verse, is, *My soul thirsteth for Thee*." God Himself becomes our supreme desire, and that is exceedingly grateful to Him.

When David wrote this Psalm he was in the wilderness of Judah, which he calls, "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." It was a place of no resources, utterly barren of the most fundamental necessities of life; and yet in such a spot as that he was not crying out for food or water, and much less for any of the luxuries of life, but thirsting for God — His power, His glory, His lovingkindness. God had become infinitely attractive to him: he no longer feared Him but desired Him. His experiences, as related in the previous Psalm, had led him to say, "In God is my *salvation* and my *glory*," and this conducted him to a point where God also became all his *desire*.

Let us test ourselves as to these things. Are we at all equal to David as regards our desires? We should be, for the salvation that we enjoy is of a fuller and richer order than was available for him, just as the revelation which we have of God goes far beyond anything which he could have known. He thirsted for God up to the limit of the knowledge that was possible for him — "so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary," are his words. He remembered how he had gone into the sanctuary and sat before the Lord; and then there had been to his soul rich unfoldings of His power and His glory and His love. Now that he was in wilderness circumstances, he desired nothing better nor beyond this.

We too are in the wilderness, for that is what the world becomes to those who have been saved out of it by the cross of Christ. There is nothing in it to feed the soul or satisfy spiritual cravings. We too have known God in His sanctuary, not now in that tent pitched over the ark, wherein David sought the Lord; nor in the gorgeous temple that Solomon built: but in that far more wonderful sanctuary to which our Lord referred when "He spake of the temple of His body" (John 2: 21). We have seen God, revealed in Jesus, through His Word. Having begun to know Him thus, we thirst to know Him better.

Thirst such as this is bound to be fully met. Hence we find the Psalmist again speaking of his soul in verse 5: "*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.*" This signifies satisfaction of a very full and abundant order. Though in a dry and thirsty land without water, David was in the enjoyment of marrow and fatness: so too we are to be filled with satisfaction in the midst of an empty and dissatisfied world. Such is the desire and purpose of God for us all; and we venture to think that if Christians universally were characterized by a deep and abiding satisfaction, the men of the world would be more deeply impressed by it than by all the gospel sermons that ever could be preached.

The world is full of unsatisfied desire, which leads to covetousness. The word to us is, "Let your conversation be without covetousness: and be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13: 5). "Satisfied with your present circumstances" (N. Tr.). Are our present circumstances then so very desirable; are they just what they should be? They are the very reverse of that. They are so undesirable that a clean sweep will be made of them immediately this age closes. Why then are we to be satisfied with them? Because as Hebrews 12 has shown, they are appointed of God to act as chastening and discipline for us, and also because He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." That is it. We may be satisfied in the midst of present circumstances because there is guaranteed to us the abiding presence of the One for whom we thirst.

It is not that we are to be satisfied with the circumstances themselves. There can be no rest, let alone satisfaction, with circumstances that are full of sin and sorrow and death. We are to be satisfied with them by being in touch with Him who is the Source of satisfaction while we are in the midst of the circumstances: so satisfied that we are filled with praise. In the Psalm the words, "My soul shall be satisfied," are surrounded with expressions of praise. "Thus will I bless Thee while I live." And again, "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips.

And further, the One who satisfies us with the knowledge of Himself and His love, also casts over us the "shadow of His wings." The present circumstances may be oppressive, they may be like the

burning sun beating down upon us, but if so, we may find shadow in His wings, as well as satisfaction in Himself.

Once more, in verse 8, the Psalmist speaks of his soul: "*My soul followeth hard after Thee.*" We might have supposed that if, having thirsted for God, he had found full satisfaction in God, there was really nothing more to be said: there could be nothing beyond that. It is true of course that when our souls are in the full and absolute satisfaction of heaven the climax will be reached. But David was far from heaven when he wrote this psalm; **he was in the wilderness** of Judah.

We too are in a wilderness, and in Christ we have discovered the Fountain-head of satisfaction. So both for David and for ourselves the Source of satisfaction lies outside the scene and circumstances that surround us. Our satisfaction depends upon keeping in close touch with the Source of it, and to maintain that touch He must be pursued.

Hence the necessity for our souls to follow hard after Him. It is not that He avoids us; it is rather that the world, though a wilderness to us, is very full of distracting objects that appeal very strongly to the flesh within us, and so we are very apt to be like children who are diverted by every little butterfly that flutters across our way. Also there are times perhaps when our Beloved seems to withdraw Himself from us, that He may provoke us to a keener following. When the bride of Solomon's Song was somewhat lethargic, and felt for a moment that she could not put on her coat and defile her feet to open to her Beloved, she discovered that He had withdrawn Himself. Then she had to say, "I sought Him but I could not find Him" (Cant. 5: 6).

But this stirred her exceedingly, and fanned her love to a very vehement flame. She began to speak about Him and to describe Him to others, and there follows that glorious passage that begins, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand," and that ends, "His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Ultimately she found Him and came up "from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved" (Cant. 8: 5).

These things are an allegory. Certain it is that if in the wilderness of this world we find a satisfying Object in Christ and our souls follow hard after Him, we shall learn how He can conduct us up from the wilderness to the heights of His own glory. We shall enter upon the experience so strikingly described by Paul in Philippians 3. We shall rejoice in Christ Jesus, and find that He eclipses all the best things connected with the flesh. We shall begin to count all things but *loss* for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and count them but refuse so that we may have Christ for our gain.

In thus following Christ we shall find that, as the Psalmist put it, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." We should put it thus, "Thy Holy Spirit upholdeth me." The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, firmly attaching our souls to Him, and maintaining us as His followers.

He does more than this. He so fills us with satisfaction that we overflow in blessing to others. Out of our inward parts there flow "rivers of living water" (John 7: 38). There is not only the upward flow of praise, which our Psalm contemplates, but this outward flow of testimony. But these rivers of living water go beyond the Psalms and lead us into the full blessing of our Christian faith.