

The Enduring Name

Psalms 40, 41, 72.

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The Psalms are divided into five books, each of them ending with a doxology. Psalm 41 is the last of the first Book: Psalm 72 the last of the second Book. There is a very striking connection, and yet a contrast, between these two Psalms.

Psalm 41 is also closely connected with Psalm 40. Both are psalms of David, yet in the former there is a great deal more of that which goes right beyond anything that he could say of himself to that which is distinctly prophetic of Christ — things that could *only* be said of Him. In Psalm 41, on the other hand, we find the experience of David, though here and there, as we can now see the language is so framed by the Spirit of God as to be applicable to Christ. This is the case of verses 5, 9, 12. It is particularly clear and definite in verse 9. David was doubtless thinking of Ahithophel, but the Spirit, who inspired him was thinking of Judas Iscariot; for the Lord applied it to him in John 13: 18.

David was a man surrounded by enemies who spoke evil against him and wished him nothing but evil, desiring that his name should perish (verse 5). He had given them some cause for this, as is shown by his confession to the Lord, put on record at the end of verse 4. Yet all his adversaries were as nothing to those who united against Jesus and hated Him "without a cause" (Ps. 69: 4). Very early in His ministry the religious leaders of Israel plotted His death, being "filled with madness" against Him. Matthew 12, Mark 2, and Luke 6 tell us about

this. Later, as John 11 shows us, the High Priest avowed their determination in the most cynical fashion, although the Holy Spirit seized upon his utterance and gave it a prophetic significance which he never intended. Their determination was that His very Name should be blotted out from under heaven.

The early chapters of the Acts bear witness to the bitter way in which the leaders tried to suppress the Name of Jesus. They could not object to the healing of the lame man, but they objected most strenuously to the virtue and power of that beneficent work being attributed to the Name. In chapter 4 we see how boldly Peter confronted them with the might and glory of that Name. They retaliated by threatening them, and later by flogging them, if only thereby they might quench the testimony to the Name that they abhorred. They spoke of Him only as "this Man," or "that Deceiver," and in this they have been followed by the mass of the Jews to this day, who only speak of Him as "the accursed One," and spit at the mention of His Name by others. When indeed will His Name perish?

His Name has not perished, and verse 9 heightens the wonder of it. Men there have been, not a few, who have become leaders of a cause which for a time has seemed to prosper. Then a blight has fallen upon it and their followers have dwindled, until even their closest friend has become an opponent. But that is a sure sign of their utter downfall and that their name will fade into oblivion. Thus it has been with many, but thus it has NOT been with Christ. Judas Iscariot sold Him for the price of a slave, and all His disciples forsook Him and fled, but His Name has not perished and never will. Now why is this?

The answer is found in the previous Psalm. It is because He was the One who came forth from God, as decreed in the book of the Divine counsels, to perfectly accomplish the will of God. In order to

carry out that will He had to go through sorrows beyond all human computation or understanding. He had to say "innumerable evils have compassed Me about" (ver. 12). The evils that would have crushed and obliterated all others never extinguished His Name. But that was because He had come forth to be the great Sacrifice of all the ages, when every kind of Jewish sacrifice had been manifested as being without any intrinsic worth, and valuable only as types of His supreme Sacrifice to be accomplished once for all. Hebrews 10 is the inspired commentary upon this matter.

We may point out that in our Psalm there are three "innumerable" things. The *innumerable* evils thronged around Him and reached their climax when He took upon Himself vicariously our iniquities. "Mine iniquities ... are more than the hairs of Mine head" - that is only another way of saying they are *innumerable*. There is only one sense in which such words as these can be accepted as coming from the sinless, holy lips of our Lord, and that is the sense of substitution — the fact that, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all." As we sometimes sing,

"Our sins, our guilt in love Divine
Confessed and borne by Thee;
The gall, the curse, the wrath were Thine,
To set Thy ransomed free."

It was our innumerable iniquities that brought the innumerable evils upon His sacred head.

But, most wonderful to say, there was another factor in the case; one which we usually arrive at last though it is the first mentioned in this Psalm. Verse 5 speaks of it — the many and wonderful thoughts and works of God, which are "more than can be numbered" that is they are *innumerable* also. He died sacrificially not only to blot out our sins, but also to bring into expression and accomplishment the glorious thoughts and purposes of God. The works which He has done are indeed many, but His thoughts are more, for a whole multitude of them are not yet wrought out in works. They will be however, wrought out and brought into display unto His eternal glory, in the ages that are yet to come.

The thoughts of God were by no means fully declared in David's day, yet he was quite conscious that they were so many as to be innumerable, and so great as to elude all definition or comprehension by us. We have a far fuller unfolding of His thoughts in the New Testament: it was given to Paul to "fulfil [complete] the Word of God" (Col. 1: 25); that is, to complete the whole circle of revealed truth. Much more then have we to confess as to God's thoughts, "they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee." If we attempt to formulate and **tabulate** them, after the fashion in which we are accustomed to treat all human thoughts, human learning, human systems, we shall in result only manifest our own foolishness.

It is well to remember this, for there has always been a great desire with many to reduce the truth of God to a philosophic system, everything duly ticketed and pigeonholed according to the most approved schemes of human logic and wisdom. Every such attempt is bound to result in error, because starting with the supreme error of assuming that what is infinite in its bearing can be confined within human boundaries. This can no more be done than the rolling seas can be compressed into the largest of human measures. One of the great poets saw this when he wrote (we quote from memory),

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day, and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of Thee

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

What he stated of the Lord Himself is true also of the innumerable thoughts which have proceeded from Him. We may apprehend them, though it is beyond us to fully comprehend them.

Those thoughts have been conveyed to us in the Holy Scriptures, and, bearing in mind what has just been said, it is not difficult to see how absolutely imperative it was that "All Scripture" should be "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3: 16). The holy men of old wrote, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. 2: 13), and consequently there was a fulness about their very words which was divine. We are conscious of that fulness as we read our Bibles, in spite of the fact that ours are only a translation from the original. All theological systems, all creeds are human, Scripture has come from God. We do well to pin our faith to it, and not to them.

The thoughts of God to which the Psalmist particularly alluded were those which are "to-ward." It is a glorious fact that the thoughts of God are *towards* His saints. This always has been so, but it was never so plainly manifest as when the word was fulfilled, "Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God." Then it could be said, "I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation" (ver. 10): words which are an inspired forecast of the fact that, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John : 17). Now that the full truth has come to light we may rejoice not only in the fact that God's thoughts are toward us in blessing, but that we are bound up with their glorious accomplishment, since "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1: 20).

Psalm 40 was fulfilled in the first advent of Christ. It was then that He came to be the Sacrifice of eternal worth, and so lay the basis for the accomplishment of the good pleasure of God, whether towards us or towards the whole redeemed creation. It was then that He went down into the "horrible pit," and the "miry clay," and the "innumerable evils," and came face to face with the adversaries, of which the closing verses of the Psalm speak, and who are again alluded to in Psalm 41. Then it was that His own familiar friend lifted up his heel against Him, so that His foes might put Him to death and congratulate themselves that His Name must now perish for evermore.

As we reach the end of Psalm 41 we are assured that His Name will not perish. In verses 11 and 12 we find words which are most happily applicable to Him. He could say to God, "Thou favourest Me," or, "Thou delightest in Me," hence the enemy could not triumph over Him. Not only did He delight in Him, but He upheld Him in His integrity, and has set Him before His face for ever. In these words we see an inspired forecast of those lovely words in John 13 — "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." He was upheld of God even in death, and has now been lifted to the Father's throne, set before His face in glory, long before the glory of the kingdom is manifested.

Our faith to-day as Christians reaches to the Lord Jesus thus hidden in the heavens. We see Him though He is unseen to mortal eye. "Whom having not seen ye love," says the Apostle Peter: but the writer of Hebrews says, "We see Jesus, . . . crowned with glory and honour." Even the Psalmist broke into a doxology when he had reached this point in the spirit of prophecy. He uttered blessing to the Lord God of Israel from eternity to eternity, and then he added "Amen and Amen" — So be it, and again so be it. Well, SO IT IS, thank God! Christ is crowned with glory before the face of God; and as for ourselves, we may well be rejoicing with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

This, however, is not the end of the matter as it concerns His Name. How could it be, when it is still dishonoured on earth though so highly honoured in heaven? His Name was to perish on earth,

according to the desire of His foes. On earth then it is to be vindicated and magnified.

Psalm 72, which closes the second book, predicts the glory of His coming kingdom. David commenced to write his desires for Solomon in poetic form: the Holy Spirit caught him up in the current of His thoughts concerning the One of whom Solomon was but a feeble type. The KING of this psalm is One to whom the kings of Tarshish and the isles, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall render tribute. He is so great that "all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." He is most evidently *the King of kings*. No one is that but Jesus.

When the once rejected Jesus takes the throne there will at last be seen in the earth an administration marked by absolute perfection. In the first place there will be the establishment of *righteousness* — the first four verses are full of this. When Jesus died, condemned alike by both Jew and Gentile, judgment was divorced from righteousness in the most outrageous way. When He returns in His glory and establishes His kingdom in power, the moment will have come of which it is said, "But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it" (Ps. 94: 15). As it is said here, "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness."

This of course will involve the *deliverance* and vindication of the oppressed and afflicted. Verses 2 and 4, and also 12-14, state this. It is true that all through the ages it is the poor and needy who have been downtrodden in the scramble of **life**, but "the poor and needy" contemplated here are without a doubt the godly folk who will be persecuted by the antichristian powers of the last days. The coming Roman leader shall "wear out the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7: 25), whereas the King of kings will bring in deliverance.

The deliverance will be followed by *blessing*. "Men shall be blessed in Him" (ver. 17). Blessing of an earthly sort is contemplated in the Psalm. Verse 16 speaks of "an handful of corn . . . upon the tops of the mountains," — a picturesque way of expressing great fertility, for at present the mountain tops are cold and bare. Verse 6 also is very graphic. The scythe of judgment will have mown the earth, and the great ones and their glory will be but withered grass, as long ago the Scripture had said. He will come down upon the earth after judgment has been executed, like gentle showers upon the thirsty ground, and hence the righteous shall flourish in His days. In that day there will indeed be "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," (Gen. 27: 27), and the blessing wherewith Isaac blessed his Supplanter son, who became Israel, will find a glorious fulfilment.

As the result of the blessing "abundance of *peace*" will at last be reached. Peace is much desired among the nations yet how often it eludes them. If they enjoy it at all it is in very scanty measure. Abundance of peace there has never yet been; but there will be in the glad day of the kingdom. When righteousness reigns, when the needy are delivered, when blessing fills the earth, then an abundant peace will be the happy consequence.

And all these most excellent things will be traced up to what? — or rather we should have said, to whom? "Men shall be blessed in HIM," we read in verse 17. He was once considered to be the accursed One, for they thought Him to be stricken and smitten of God. Now they see Him to have been the great Sacrifice, as detailed in Psalm 40, and therefore the Source from whom all their blessing flows. Their glorious King is the Fountain-head of all their blessing.

This discovery must of necessity provoke their praise in return. They will bless His Name. And not only they, for the blessing will roll out world-wide to all the nations. Consequently "all nations shall call Him blessed." When we to-day address Him, or speak of Him, as "our blessed Lord," we are but anticipating that which will be universal presently.

"His Name shall endure for ever." Here we find God's answer to man's evil question. When shall His Name perish? It shall never perish, but endure for ever.

Psalm 40 ends with the humbled Christ lifted up and set before God's face for ever. Psalm 72 ends with a glorified Christ publicly established as King of kings, filling the earth with righteousness, blessing and peace. In both cases a doxology is provoked, but the second is rather fuller in its character. God can now be blessed as the One who alone does wondrous things. Men may appear to be doing wonderful things to-day with all their inventions, but they are not. Their inventions will yet, in all probability, fall disastrously upon their own heads. When the King of kings takes His throne in glory, nothing **will appear** wonderful but what God has done in and by Him. In that day the whole earth will be filled with His glory, and the name of Jehovah will be everlastingly blessed.

Once more we have the repeated Amen. So be it, and again, so be it. That this may all be fulfilled in its season is surely the fervent desire of all our hearts.

Until that day is reached we are left in the place of expectation and dependence and prayer, waiting for the first movement connected with the ushering in of that day; namely, the coming of the Lord Jesus for all His saints.

When David saw, by the spirit of prophecy, the coming glory of Christ, his prayers were ended, nothing remained for which to pray. It is indeed a satisfying prospect. What will the realization of it be?