

Lovingkindness

Psalm 36: 5-10

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We have been engaged with the sphere where the constraining love of Christ is known, and I wish to follow that theme in using this Psalm as a description of how that love has reached us, and what it has brought us into. I have passed over the opening verses where the sinful character of man is outlined, assured that all in this company have been awakened to that fact, and have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. We have movements described here, beginning with Jehovah in the heavens, and reaching down to the sinful sons of men in this world, with a view to constituting them righteous. The section which I have read begins with mercy, and ends with a people once sinful but now constituted righteous in the divine estimation.

"Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens." This word "mercy" is the same word as that which is translated twice in this Psalm as "lovingkindness." It appears to be a compound word which can be translated as mercy; love; kindness or, as here lovingkindness. That mercy was towards us in the heavens. It is the fruit of the love of God, and this had its beginning in the heavens. One is reminded at once of the great chapter where the sinful need of mankind is so clearly stated, Ephesians 2. In that chapter the mercy of God, springing from His great love, shews the attitude of God towards us as sinners, and as the fruit of the great blessing He has brought us into in sovereign mercy, He will one day shew His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

That mercy began in heaven and was toward us, but how was it to reach us? that brings us to the second statement, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." At one time I thought this reaching was *upward*, but I see now it is *downward*. The word "reaching" is in italics, but a movement downward is obviously in view. It suggests the downward movement of our Lord Jesus Christ in order to bring that mercy to us, and to demonstrate the faithfulness of God. Promises of blessing for mankind had long been made through the prophets, and it may have seemed as time lengthened that God had forgotten His promises. We have but to turn to the first chapter of the New Testament to see how God has implemented them. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1: 1). Then further down that same chapter "Behold, a virgin shall be with child," (v. 23). Here in the first chapter of the New Testament we see the promises of God fulfilled. Taking those promises in the order in which they were historically given, we read that Jesus was the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham and the seed of David. The birth of Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of all three. Thus we see that Matthew, chapter 1, is an outstanding witness to the faithfulness of God. Reaching to the clouds would involve the downward movement of our Lord Jesus to reach us in mercy.

"Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." We read in the margin, "the mountains of God (EL)," a title which means "The Mighty God"; the word great does not refer to the mountains but to God. This statement obviously reaches down to earth, and involves the Son of God moving through this world in moral elevation as suggested by the mountains. Five times in the gospel by Matthew we read of the Lord being on a mountain. Does it not assure us that, as moving here in Manhood, His pathway through this world was one of moral elevation? This righteousness, as seen in Him while here, was manifested in every step of His pathway.

But if the righteousness of God was to reach us in blessing, another step was necessary, and that

step is in the next statement. "Thy judgments are a great deep." Reference has been made to the book of Job, and I also call attention to one interesting feature found in that book. Elihu speaks of God's shewing man what was righteous — that came to light in the pathway of our Lord — but he adds, "He will render unto man His righteousness" and that could be only as a result of the work upon the cross, (Job 33: 23-26). So we read of "a great deep," the place to which Christ went with a view to bringing men into righteousness before God. The result of that stoop has secured preservation for man and beast. We know from Romans 8, that both man and the whole of the groaning creation will yet share in this recovery in the world to come. Such then have been the movements of Christ in His love.

If such have been the movements *downward*, there is to be with us a movement *upward*, as the blessed answer to it all. Already we are beyond the judgment of God as having believed the gospel; moreover we are constituted righteous through the cross of Christ; soon we shall meet the Lord on the cloud and enter heaven with Him, to be for ever with the Lord. We shall thus be in the place where mercy had its beginning and we shall be there for ever.

"How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings," v. 7. The first effect in us when we came to appreciate this lovingkindness was that we put our trust in God. Under the shadow of His wings implies that we are eternally safe. Well may the apostle write, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," (Romans 2: 4). As a result of our trust in God we are saved and brought into the circle of abundant satisfaction, as we read "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." In the details of the offerings we learn that the fat was always for God; it was His portion of that which speaks of Christ. Thus we are brought to enjoy the pleasure of the Father in His well-beloved Son; surely the region of satisfied desire. He who is the "bread of God," is also the "bread of life." He is food for God and food for His people. Then we read "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." Bread sustains and water satisfies, and we have both abundant sustainment and abundant satisfaction in the house of God. This becomes available to us in our gatherings, for the house carries a collective character. Someone said to a brother, "Meetings, meetings, why you would think we should die without them." "Yes," said the brother, "I believe *I* would." It is in fellowship one with another that we enjoy these blessings to the full.

"With Thee is the fountain of life," v. 9. The fountain of life is with God, but He has not held it back, it is flowing toward us all. It is life in the power of the Holy Spirit, "living water" as our Lord called it. The fountain is with God, and the Spirit fills our souls with the love of God, and "in thy light shall we see light." John tells us in his epistle that we are in the light and are walking there. Both life and light are available to us in the power of the Spirit of God, and added to this is "lovingkindness," v. 10. Who but the Son could have made life, light and love available to us? — He who came down from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Him. This involves the gathering of all those whom the Father has given Him, and we are in that company today. Can we doubt that the Son moved down to secure this company, and produce from them worship to His Father? Whilst it has resulted in such wonderful blessing for us, the outcome is that our hearts are led in praise and worship to the Father, the Source of all.

David in this Psalm asks that lovingkindness and righteousness may continue to the upright in heart, and we can be sure that these things will continue as long as there are those in this world who value and desire them. Through the love and mercy of our God we have been drawn into this wonderful circle. May we appreciate it fully by eating of this rich provision and drinking of this living water. Sustained and satisfied we shall then rise in moral superiority to the blandishments and attractions of this world, and our hearts will respond in praise and worship to our God.