

# Asherite Psalms

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## Part Second. EARLIER MINISTRY.

### *ASHERITE PSALMS.\* No. 1.*

\*These and the following lectures have been printed from authentic, and in many cases verbatim notes, taken at the time, and since carefully rewritten, compared with other notes, and revised. — ED.

### Psalm 1.

The name of the Book of Psalms is Tehillim in Hebrew, which means praise. The great secret of wisdom is to know how to put things as God puts them. If we read the Psalms aright we should find them all *praise*, hallel. That which viewed in one aspect might be as a firebrand to the conscience, in another would be blessed light shining in the darkness of the soul. Many of the Psalms begin with this word "blessed." It may be said of many of them as of the Beatitudes in Matt. 5, that if used as tests to probe the soul there would be anguish; but if we see that they express what Christ is there will be all *praise*. Thus, "Blessed are the merciful." If I see Jesus in this, I see just what I need as a poor ruined prodigal.

It is well to remark that these Psalms beginning "blessed" the Jews call Asherite Psalms. Asher was the name of one of Jacob's sons. The mother, delighted with her child, called him Asher — "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed." These Psalms are addressed to three distinct characters of persons, and turn upon three different pivots. First, Psalm 1 is the blessing of some one who has perfectly done God's will: there is no allowance made for any evil — all Christ. Secondly, Psalm 32 is the blessing of the poor sinner who has not a shred of righteousness of his own, but is grafted into Christ. Thirdly, Psalm 41 one whose sins have been pardoned, walking in the ways of Christ, into whom he is grafted. They are either Christ as He was down here; Christ as He is; or Christ as He will be hereafter.

It is easy to see how entirely distinct are the three grounds just named. In the first it is one who

can claim a right to His reward; but who can say it? (None of us, doubtless, would take such ground; but still there may be the thought of *getting better*.) But in Psalm 1 it is *Christ*, not what He says of Himself, but what God says of Him. Here is the delight of God in that Perfect One, that God-Man who never did anything amiss, so that He has given all things into His hands, and set Him upon the throne.

Though we may not be in the danger of taking the ground of this first blessing, I do think there is danger of the saints confounding the second and third species of blessedness; *i.e.* the blessedness of the poor prodigal utterly lost, and freely saved by Christ, with that of Him who has the joy of the Spirit in the sense of obedience. It is needful to have the foot firmly grounded on the Rock, Christ — free grace being the ground on which we are saved. Then there will be the going on to walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Saints begin in free grace, and then they try (and ought to try) to walk; but they are apt to forget that it is still the *Rock* on which the foot is planted. It is common in the Psalms to see a righteous one and all unrighteous one — this wicked one is always Satan, or antichrist. Again, in other Psalms there is one righteous one contrasted with many wicked. In this first Psalm it is this. Here we have the God-Man tried in *the circumstances of men*. It is not like the praise of Christ, now that He has sat down on high as He is presented to us in Ephesians. It is true that God does now give Christ the praise that is due to Him as the perfect Man; but He has higher \*glory than this now. He was not only put into the furnace and tried here in the place of the wicked, He was truly put into the furnace, and no evil could be found in Him. He saw the path of the wicked, and the seat of the scornful, and still He remained the perfect pilgrim and stranger, "separate from sinners;" but God had thoughts higher than these, when He pointed out to His Son from His eternal throne, that if He would take the cup of wrath, receiving thus the penalty of sin, He would highly exalt Him, and give Him a name above every name. Here was all the largeness of the Divine counsels as to *Christ* as Man. Jesus is seen in a narrow field, bounded off as it were; God points to what His Son was here. I do not think that the sinner finds *true* rest of heart, unless he sees what sort of person Christ was down here. God did not at first present His Son in all His exaltation, but showed Him as He walked on earth, saying, as it were, "Read my character by what you find in Him. Just as He is upon earth you may suppose me to be as God." I suppose the very spring of our first comfortable thought about God is the being brought to see *God's thoughts about Christ*. When wearied with all that is in self, has it not been brought vividly before the mind that God delights in Christ, having found in Him all that He can admire?

There are two things connected with this; first, God has found one in whom He can fully rest. Secondly, He is so occupied with Christ that I can draw near as accepted in the Beloved. I am sure that our near approach to God is inseparable from God's delight in Christ. God is occupied with this perfect One, and I know it. This measuring of what Christ is to God is very different from being occupied about that of which I am the centre; and it is the only ground of stable peace.

Verse 1. There is no provision made in this first Psalm for the slightest failure. It must present Christ. Of course it gives our moral characteristics if we are saints; but none could take such ground for a moment but Christ. Could Paul, could Peter, have taken up this language? No! It is the character of the way in which we try to walk; but no saint can say, Here is that which abstractedly marks me. What was that which characterized Paul? That he had been a blasphemer, but had *obtained mercy*. How careful he ever was to take this ground; but God came in in spite of it all. This first verse tells our hearts that we are blessed, not on the ground of what we are, but altogether on the ground of what *He is*. We have the threefold character of man's evil here; first, without *God* as the poor Gentiles; secondly, in sinnership, every man wandering in his own way as the Jews and apostate Christendom; and thirdly, the heading of evil in one man, antichrist — the seat of the scornful.

Verse 2. This enters more deeply into what the blessed Lord Jesus was. I believe there is a deep

mine of comfort suited to meet our need down here, in thus looking at the Lord Jesus as man. Christ looks up to God and says, "I love thee, and I love what is dear to thee." Look at the Lord Jesus as loving His neighbours — the poor Jews, or more generally man — the Gentiles, etc., or the Church as Elder Brother, Firstborn from the dead. Thus it is that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We have His sympathy as one who has been a man down here. Let me ask you, Do you know what it is to be in Christ's presence, and to find His heart burdened? The Jews, the Gentiles, the brethren, are all dear to Christ's heart. I am as sure of this as that He is in the heavens; and I cannot say otherwise to God, than that the One at Thy right hand loves thee, and the things that thou lovest.

This is not merely a fact, but it is that which we should do well to lay to heart. Has not Christ's heart been occupied about you during the past night, and up to when? Ah! He begins where He was found, with His Father. Dark man turns to darkness, and thinks of Christ as beginning with our darkness; but it is not so with Christ. He begins with God's thoughts above, we always begin from the *evil*, but Christ always begins from the *good*. His brethren are God's. He loves His own, because God loves them. How should He but love them? The very place which Christ holds is inseparably connected with God's love to some one else. If He is the Firstborn, it is among many brethren. Could any of us have held such a place? Our stress would have been upon the *firstborn*, "I am the Firstborn." Not so with Christ. If He is the Firstborn, it is to bring His brethren to. God. What would all the preeminence be to Christ if it separated from God? Eve, in order to gain the pre-eminence, risked the loss of God; but Christ being from the Father, was ever associated with the Father. When seen pre-eminent in glory, it will be in full communion with God. The delight of Christ is to bring all the fulness of God's character to bear upon every little crevice in our hearts. What is that which is most precious to Christ? That through Him God could make Himself known to the many sons — all the fulness of His heart, the riches of His grace. How comforting, too, is this love of Christ's heart with reference to the poor Jews, who are becoming more and more the subjects of interest in all that is taking place on earth.

What was the origin of the present war? The Holy Land. Satan has a spite against the spot where Christ's glory as King is to be displayed, and so he has used it as a firebrand to the whole earth. But in Christ's heart there is a warm spot of love for His nation. The philosophers of this world, such as Voltaire, could only read in the history of the Jews that which degraded the character of God; but they knew not what was in Christ's heart as to His people. So also as to the Gentiles; if I look at them, and consider their sorrow, is there nothing in it which moves Christ's heart? Loving God, He loves all these — Gentiles, Jews, the Church, and more than Himself. For them He gave up all, and every thought connected with them in the heart of God is linked with Christ. Every trait in the divine character, everything which was morally glorious in God, shone out in Christ, as seen in this Psalm; light in the midst of darkness. The Son of Man gave the complete vindication of the character of God, and thus He fully merited this title of "*Blessed*."

Verse 3. He could not be *alone* in this glory. "He bringeth forth His fruit in His season." "I am the true vine, ye are the branches." Here is the full thought even with regard to God's earthly purposes. There is nothing before God but one single Being as the root and channel of all blessing. Observe, that the provision here made for us (and it is always so when *mercy* comes in) is on the ground of that which is in us not being what God can like. The peculiarity of the blessing connected with this root is that there is *culture* and *success*. Unlike Luke 14 we were looking at lately, where all the culture ended only in failure and disappointment.

"Success!" All things work together for good. Is this truth fresh in your hearts with respect to God's dealing with you now? Each of us has some peculiar trial, some thorn in the flesh, some pebble in the shoe; the gashes made by it may be rankling and festering, but you cannot, any of you, say it will

end in disappointment. All things *work together* for good. In the light of the glory you cannot call this otherwise than *good*. The present distress may work out much evil, much of the world which was in our hearts; but so standing before Christ it will surely be found among the *all* things.

I may not deal with it, as in Luke 14, attempting to set things to rights around me, but rather as the poor prodigal in Luke 15; and then in the taste of grace we shall find every little hollow, every pool in the valley, filled with water, because we shall see how God has a purpose of blessing in it all.

Verses 4, 5. Though there be now a calm, the storm is at hand. What will it be when God arises, and, as Righteous and Holy, sweeps all before Him? We cannot dwell upon the misery and anguish of those who are outside Christ. When the hurricane arises, when God rises up and says, "Now I am come to reckon with you" — blessed for those who are sheltered in Christ.

Verse 6. Our blessing is, that we have in Christ one who has communicable blessing for others, even for us. This Book of Praises has the best beginning. It begins with Christ, who is emphatically the Blessed One. As we near heaven, drawing towards the edge of the wilderness, the comparative value of Christ to God increases in our thoughts. When I first set out on the journey, the two thoughts uppermost in my mind were, that I as a poor sinner, who was so far off, had found salvation; and that I could go through the wilderness singing of mercy, for I had God to carry me through. Little indeed did I think what sort of a pilgrim I should make. But now in approaching Jordan I find it is more the thought of what *Christ* is — what He will be in the glory, what God's satisfaction and delight in Him is, takes the place in the heart. Were we more occupied with God's thoughts, and God's delight in Christ, we should have more strength for our pilgrimage; and very sure do I feel, that were any of us now present to be conscious that we should be called hence, say in an hour or two, the only thing which would give light to our souls would be the apprehension of what Christ is before God; and His delight in Him. I know not one thing more to be desired for the enlargement and refreshment of our souls than to have the sunshine of God's delight in Christ shining into our souls as we go onward through present darkness.

## **ASHERITE PSALMS. No. 2.**

### **PSALM 32.**

THERE is one thing peculiarly sweet in connection with the gospel of God's grace. It is that which suits the prodigal when he is brought home to the Father's house, as well as when he is in the far country wanting bread. Hence I have no sympathy with the remark which is sometimes made, "Christians do not want the gospel." Of course it is one thing to preach the gospel to Christians, and another thing to preach it to poor sinners by the wayside who have never received it; but as for the gospel, by which I understand all the riches of the grace of God, we always need it: for myself, I expect to enjoy the gospel nowhere so much *as in heaven*.

This thirty-second psalm is one of the Asherite — i.e. blessing-psalms. Psalm 1 describes the perfect Man, the object of God's affection and delight. Psalm 32 is the blessedness of the one whom the Shepherd has found and brought home. There is a verse at the close of Psalm 2 which connects itself with this in some way; the same idea is repeated in Psalm 33: 21, and Psalm 34: 8. It is connected with the word *trusteth*.

The subject I desire to look at in this Psalm is the blessedness of the saint who knows, like David, after the terrible guiltiness which occasioned such conflict within, the shelter of the cleft in the Rock, opened to him so that no discovery in himself can frighten him out of it. It is not only that I am picked

up as a poor sinner, a brand plucked out of the burning, but there is something in God's character developed in this. I am picked up and put in the cleft of the Rock. Then, being set there, the peculiarity of the blessing involves something more — mercy I have found. Where has that set me? Not only has a mortal disease been found in me, and a remedy provided, but when I come to look at the remedy, I find in it altogether something peculiar. In God's dealings with the poor sinner, then, there is something far beyond anything in creation. Nothing *there* was needed to bring forth the down-stooping of God; neither would it have been for His glory as Creator to have tolerated that in the creature which was unworthy of Himself. But the secret thing hidden in the character of God', in His eternal counsels, was *redemption*. In redemption you get what had no expression in creation; that is. the expression of *Himself*, of His own character which He gave in handing forth from His heart the Son of His love; not to a cup of blessing in the garden of Eden, but to a cup of wrath on the cross; not to be glorified on earth, but to take the place of ruined sinners. God's ways are past finding out. To enter more deeply into what He is, to rest there, is what our souls need. In Him we are rich. Here is a bright spot for the soul. How happy for me to be a vessel chosen for the showing out of what are the riches of grace hidden in God. God had His own character complete just as much before the manifestation of this attribute of His mercy to the sinner. Just as the father's heart was the same when the prodigal was in the far country, as when he was brought back. "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad:" just so with God. There was nothing new in Him, but it is the display of divine love, as here in Psalm 32, far beyond the display of divine glory at creation. The angels desire to look into these things. In Rev. 5 none taste redemption-blessedness save two parties — God and the poor sinner. The angels cannot sing that song. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me."

Let us try to look at this; God and a poor sinner standing together. God knows what He is, and what we are. If we only look at ourselves there is no help for us. Satan never suggested that I have sinned, but God must bear the punishment. There is something in God's thoughts that quite sets at defiance man's mind. We could never think how God had riches in Himself, by which He could provide by His own love for our salvation from the depths of misery and condemnation. We should never have thought of the way in which He has communicated this new life by the new nature, and the Holy Ghost dwelling there. I think of the moral character of God, and can He take up a poor sinner and make him fit to sit down with Him? "I know a way," said God — "mercy. My love shall go and pluck the brands out of the burning, and so bring me more glory than the first creation could have done. I will bring to light this attribute of my moral character, and produce it in them." There is nothing in the nature of the sinner but what God hates. The light of God shining into a man shows him what he is.

There are three kinds of evil spoken of here — "transgression," which supposes a command men have swerved from; "iniquity," which is opposed to moral purity; and "sin," which is erring from God. Christ was the contrary of all that is in man. There was none of all this in Him to be covered. Besides these three things, there is in the experience of the man, *inward guile*. There is an inward veil over the heart, and that is the worst kind of moral evil. This has to come out to the light, and here is the great difficulty with ourselves. If we know ourselves we shall be conscious of this, and there is an inward fire burning. We cannot say we have had no guile; we know we have.

Saul of Tarsus found the fruit of his sin, not in the bottom of his own heart, but up in heaven — "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." We never know ourselves, but we must be ready to say to our flesh, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." David's joy was in being a vessel to contain the blessedness of all this grace shown in the forgiveness of all transgression, iniquity, sin, guile. Were there a fold, in which was one poor sheep that had wandered and been lost, and the shepherd had gone forth and rescued it at his own great suffering, I suppose that would be a marked sheep, because by that sheep the

character of the shepherd would be most displayed (see David, in 1 Sam. 17); and to David's heart here there was evidently this: "I am one whom the Shepherd has picked out to show His character. Not simply what a happy person I am, but what glory the Shepherd has got for Himself by showing mercy to such an one as I am." David knew God was seeking to get Himself a name by what He was doing. This is the very richness of the gospel to the poor sinner who believes it. If I think of a firebrand plucked out, a poor sinner who deserved wrath rescued, there is a sort of effort to think of not getting my desert; there will be a sort of exercise of soul before one is perfectly at rest. There will be a less degree of this, if the work of the Shepherd who sought the sheep is the prominent thought; but if I think of the One for whom I was sought, then there will be deep joy in the soul of knowing what a welcome I shall have there.

The turn between the fifth and sixth verses is very beautiful. In verse 5, mercy has been found for the individual. In verse 6, we see what God has done by bestowing mercy on one, to get Himself glory, so that others may be encouraged to come to Him. If a John Bunyan, a Saul of Tarsus, a Peter may come, I may. "Well," the poor sinner will say, "God picks up the worst, the very refuse, to show that it is nothing in the poor sinner that entitles him to notice; but *mercy* draws, and none can hinder." "Nothing but God's mercy brought me here," would David say. In verses 3 and 4, David had spoken of his guile before God. There is nothing which even the natural man detests more than guile (a guileful man, if known to be so, is ruined); but the answer to all in David's soul is, "I have found *mercy*."

Then, in verse 7, he goes on to appropriate what was in God. This is just what we have learnt in spirit with respect to Christ. Man strained up to reach that forbidden tree, but Christ stoops down to take the cup of wrath, that He may save the lost; and He brings us up to His place of blessing. He not only has opened to us the things which are given, but He gives us to know *God for us*. All that is His, ours. Not merely outside things, but the Father's house is not complete without the *children*. This house of the Father's is ours. It is the *Father's* house, not merely *God's* house. The glory, the Father's love, all is ours. "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them;" and then, to show there was no restriction in the *love*, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." So David here takes up everything in the same way. "Thou art my hiding-place." But we see what David could not see; viz., that the Spirit is given to us — not only the spirit of revelation, but the Spirit within forming the affections suited to the relationship, "Abba, Father." The mercy is according to God. All our sentient needs are met by it, and the man is without guile.

These three blessings are given, and then God begins to deal with the man from the other extremity of His own blessedness, so that he can say, "All that thou art is mine. That glory that is in thee — mercy will be as a wall of fire round about to compass me in." David's heart was bubbling up with the living waters, and then (v. 8) God lets out His heart to him, to show him how He would come down to him down here. It is not only I, but thou — "I will be with thee where thou art in thy trouble and sorrow" — which is the thought conveyed. It is a much deeper thing to be able to say, "I am my Beloved's," than "my Beloved is mine." All that God is gives me rest; and deep is the blessedness, knowing that I have Him as my portion; but to know that I am indeed His, that He is with me in all circumstances, so near to me, is a deeper experience still.

The minds of the saints one seldom finds rising above Romans 8: "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died," etc. Blessed experience indeed! But it is more to feel and know how God is entering into all my circumstances. I do not here mean as the God of providence merely, as Christians speak of Him. I do not doubt but He is the God of providence to the world quite as much now as He was in the days of Jonah and Nineveh; but some will try to strain the grace of Christ through

providence, and this is wrong, and is sure to bring in disappointment.

A dear saint of God I knew, now at rest with Him, did this. He took up the providential blessings of Psalm 91, and when the plague was raging around him in the East, he felt sure it would not come nigh his house. The pestilence seemed to depart for a time without having touched him. It speedily returned, however, and cut off his wife. What desolation of heart followed! But it is another thing for the heavenly man, a saint brought into heavenly blessing, to be finding God associating Himself with him in every step of the wilderness. This brings in resurrection, while the other does not. It is not deliverance out of the troublous circumstances that we must look for, but it is to learn our God as the God of resurrection in the midst of death. In all the rolling down and rolling up again we get something connected with Christ. (See 2 Cor. 4 and Rev. 1) Neither Paul nor John were taken out of the trial. Not as God appeared to Abraham — El-Shaddai, but "you will have trial down here; but I will be with you in it." The Lord speaks to John of what *He* is — the One who is "alive for evermore;" therefore it was, "Fear not." The Lord did not deliver him from his sorrow in Patmos. So with us. We must expect to find circumstances of death encompassing us here; but to know God as the God of resurrection in Christ. brings in fuller peace, and deeper, blessing, because it brings Himself so close to us as our Father, numbering the very hairs of our head.

Christians generally are not nearly so much occupied with Christ as with themselves, neither do their circumstances bring them to Christ. If one may answer for another, I am sure all will have to confess how little we have known of what it is to have our Father with us down here. Not only does the light of Christ's glory stream upon us through the veil, the rent veil; not only is the bright eye of Jesus our risen Lord upon us, but *our God is here*. Let us confess our shortcomings in the apprehension of it; and however impassable every sorrow may be to my mind, still the Father and Christ are close to me to teach me resurrection power in and through the circumstances, and make me know that "the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us."

This psalm is a psalm for the wilderness. Mercy meets in it the firebrand fit for destruction, the wandering sheep brought back by the Shepherd; and then God cheers the heart as it, goes on with the knowledge of what He is to it, thus pouring in the oil of gladness.

### **ASHERITE PSALMS. No. 3.**

#### **PSALM 40, 41.**

IN reading the Psalms one finds them arranged in couplets. Very few of them stand as solitary witnesses of the remarks made in them, but in twos and threes. Whoever arranged the Psalms, we know they were so ordered in divine wisdom, not according to *time*, but in reference to their *subjects*. A psalm of Moses following one of David, and those written later are placed earlier, and the early, late. They are arranged into books 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. A person who had been reading them attentively found they were divided into five books, and was surprised to see that in Hebrew they have them distinctly arranged in five. The headings of the Psalms have as much divine authority as the book itself. The Jews would never touch them any more than the other part.

These two psalms, 40 and 41, together. In connection with what has been said before, there is another general remark I would make, too often overlooked. The doctrinal truth connected with union, so new to some minds, is found from Scriptures to have been in God's mind from the beginning. It is new to us in the sense of the unity of the body. The vital union which exists between the Head and the members we do not find in the Psalms.

But there are other principles of union which are not vital, such as that which exists in a family, a country, etc. In Adam we see the unity of a system connected with this earth. There is no other world but this that we know of where man in Eden was the centre of a system. It pointed to Christ we doubt not, brought out more fully in Psalm 8, Eph. 1, and 1 Cor. 12. The Adamic centre of unity is the largest and most general thought of union. Then, as relating to Israel, there was a King as a centre. Christ. is Priest and King. See Psalm 18, which is the summing up of the whole history of the kingdom.

The heading up of things under one is a leading thought in Scripture; and as to the acting parties connected with man, the head casting its light or darkness over its entire system. The psalm answering to the psalm showing the blessed, perfect Man upon earth, is the second. Psalm 1 shows the only One who has a claim as the root of blessing, and all who reject Him, as in Psalm 2, must be swept away in destruction.

Again, the answering psalm to the thirty-second is the thirty-first. In the thirty-second we have the poor sinner made righteous; and the ground of that being accomplished, we find in the thirty-first, Christ on the cross bearing the sinner's sin. We can never happily get through the Psalms without seeing these couplets; for I must see the judgment which fell upon Christ was *my* judgment, that it was definitely for me that Christ died on the tree. This is more than "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." God said in this to the world, "Here is a door open, and I desire my Son to be known as the Saviour of sinners — 'come.'" Christ is the open door through which mercy shines down on the world; but that is different from my knowing Christ as the One who bore my sins, the One on whose pierced hands and feet and side I can look and say my individual sins were there. This is how I have peace. Christ was entirely identified with His people, and all that He did was for them. He said of His people's sins, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me; I cannot look up." His Spirit was given to us, but in the essential element of Christ's standing He was *alone!* There was no dross there. Satan heated the furnace for Him as hot as possible, and God poured out His wrath upon Him; but all heaped together could not bring out one element of dross. Nothing came out but His own infinite perfectness as a Man under the hand of God. If He had not been so tested it might have been said He died for His own sins; but no, not one failure could be charged upon Him.

We find an identification of Christ with the remnant of Israel — one Spirit in Him and in them — Christ, the Introducer of the Spirit. The source is in Him, and communicated to His people, but *one* Spirit. The same things are said of Him and of Israel; *e.g.* "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." With the thought of this corporate union, there is great need of care in reading the Psalms whether as Adamic unity or as "one spirit with the Lord."

Psalm 40 shows the blessedness of the man who could *trust in God*. Christ. is the Truster in God. The first wonder in the psalm is that Christ should be in this place (Heb. 2) "made a little lower than the angels." The patience of Christ! The "patience" John speaks of in Revelation was not the experience of John first, but of *Christ*. Now He is waiting in patience. He has sat down expecting until His foes be made His footstool. He served for a reward, but He has not received it yet.

In this psalm we have Christ as the substitute — the "Just for the unjust." In verse 5, He is standing in connection with the people of Israel, and recounts before God the wonders He has done. It is the history of one who has been down into a very low place and come up into a very high one.

Verse 1. Judgment for sin. "I waited patiently for the Lord." He was true to God, true to His counsels, true to His purposes. In verses 2 and 3, He did not come up as He went down. He went down as the Man of sorrows, and came up as the One anointed above His fellows. It is very sweet to connect these two things, and to see that what He has is shareable with His people. He will sing the song in our

midst. God had peculiar work for Him to do, and He pleads His righteousness in service (vv. 6-10), and how He had been in this place as one judged by God. The substitution of Christ, and the completeness of the way in which He bore the judgment, cannot be too frequently thought of by us. The cup He drank quietly from God's hand. Verse 12: The Spirit of Christ testifying in the remnant. There is unity of spirit in Christ and in them. It is true *their* testimony goes beyond their experience, which could not be with Christ.

It is very important to divide between three things which are often confounded together — conscience, truth, and the Spirit. If God is acting upon the conscience, there will be a measure of light, though it may be very small. The conscience may not be able to comprehend its own latent hope of mercy. If the conscience deal honestly, it is so far well; it is the work of the Spirit through the measure of truth given. But if we take the measure of truth we have, and make it the standard, we are doing that which is most injurious to the conscience, and dishonouring to the Spirit of God, and it is sure to bring in pride and a fall. God says, "That boil must ripen into a head before I do anything." A man may get proud, *e.g.*, about the truth he believes of the coming of the Lord — the flesh has come in, and God cannot go on with that; so the world comes in, and then there is a fall. Thus God's truth is injured, and weak Christians, whom we ought to have helped to build up with the truth God has shown us, are stumbled by it. All truth must be held in communion with the Living God. If the heart be warm, even with defective views, there will be blessing. Compare two tracts for instance. One perhaps may be very deficient in the presentation of truth, but having a savour of God. The other a clear statement of truth, but dry and cold as the moonlight on a frosty night. Such truth God does not own. It must flow from Himself, and God is a living Person.

In this remnant we find the Spirit of God acting on their consciences and on their hearts, though they do not see truth exactly in God's way. They have God's Spirit giving testimony by them, and they have the *Living God*. The language of Ps. 41 is the language of such as these. It presents a company speaking of their sins (v. 4); and then (v. 9) the passage quoted in application to Judas is most remarkable. In principle, the same things apply to the little remnant in Christ's day, and those who will be separated from the mass by-and-by. (Isa. 8) The unity of the Spirit is the key with which to unlock these psalms. (v. 3.) The word rendered sickness here is rendered griefs in Isaiah 53. I am convinced this is the true rendering; sickness is something internal. Grief is produced from without. The Hebrew signification is rubbed or worn down with much painstaking, as a jewel or gold is polished. Affliction and tribulation come from without, and produce this effect upon the soul. The remnant, as in Daniel 11, are not recognized as being in sickness, but going through tremendous tribulation. They are dragged through terrible billows almost overwhelming, the effect of which is to rub off all that is contrary to God by outside things and in the furnace. He will make them know what they are.

The blessedness of trusting in God applies in principle to the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, down here. It is the inner man which the Lord strengthens, and therefore there must be death and resurrection in connection with it. A man is most strengthened from God when most broken down; therefore there must be this death and resurrection, not only as relating to outward things in service, but as to inward feelings, etc. Never did Christ's moral strength shine out as it did on the cross. The young Christian starts with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory perhaps, in the sense of recent deliverance from the burden of sin and condemnation, but after a time he may lose that. After many years of pilgrimage you may no longer see the bright countenance, the brilliant expression, etc.; but there may be much more of divine power and grace in him now than then. Divine joy is seeing God in everything; that is more deeply felt after the blast of time than in all the freshness of the young Christian. There was more power displayed, and more depth of divine joy in Christ, when He stood calmly still,

allowing all the waves and billows to pass over Him, than even in those few occasions when He rejoiced in spirit during His active service.

So many a person thinks he is patient at first starting, but afterwards learns to be much more patient under God's will. The springs are found in another source. It is one thing to feel joy, and another thing to say, as Paul, "All is gone! all have forsaken me!" The Church is gone, but I have got God. The body, too, may be brought down, and we may have to learn that there is no spring of strength in ourselves, but only in God *Himself*, and we must wait for Him to raise us; and not only the vessel may be cast down, but the inward renewed nature which God has given. We have to learn to suffer God's will as well as to do it. I have here one little word for the aged saints especially, and for brethren seeking to labour for the Lord. There is far more blessing sometimes in suffering God's will than in doing it. There is great price to Him in the patient, quiet endurance of suffering, even though our own self-will may have led to it. This of course was never the case with Christ; but we see how He was the patient sufferer when He gave Himself up. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." There was all the energy of divine life in that corn; but there must be the suffering of death before the life would be imparted to others. The ripening of divine life and grace in us, and breaking down the old man, is often accomplished by our being put into the crucible where we cannot act, but can only trust in God to act for us.