

## First Psalm.

BY J. W. SPEAR.

Blest is the careful soul that shuns  
Ungodly counsels, vile and vain;  
Nor stands with Belial's sinful sons;  
Nor sits with scorners to profane:

But finds a pure, supreme delight  
In all the statutes of the Lord,  
And gives the hours of day and night  
To meditations on His word.

As by the living stream is found  
The tree whose growth no drought im-  
pedes,  
So shall his leaf and fruit abound,  
And he shall thrive in all his deeds.

But as the chaff before the gale,  
The godless shall be swept away,  
And at the final judgment fail,  
Nor in the saints' assembly stay.

God knows His faithful servants' path,  
And guides their steps and gives them  
peace  
But all His foes shall feel His wrath;  
Their sinful ways in death shall cease.

Newark, N. J.

## Blessed is the Man.

Psalm 1-6.

BY REV. C. H. MOSCROP.

The Psalms describe life. Taken as a whole they may well be called the Song of Life. It is true the whole is made up of many songs, describing many and varied experiences, but they are all keyed to one note. By contrast, comparison and illustration they emphasize the truth that it is a good thing to be a righteous man. This thought is found in the first Psalm, which serves as a prologue to the book. The theme of this Psalm, as indeed of the whole book, is, "The Blessedness of the Righteous." The truth of this is shown in the consideration of some of the conditions which minister to the well-being of the just. These are:

(1) AVOIDANCE OF EVIL ASSOCIATIONS. Blessed, fortunate indeed is the man who has nothing to do with the activities of the wicked.

Happy, first of all, in escaping the bondage of sin. To this end sin exercises its alluring power. The danger is hidden at first. The influence of evil is not felt in the beginning. But once started the walk gives place to a fixed condition and full acceptance. If the end could be sure from the beginning, the start might not have been made. The course once entered upon leaves little hope of escape. Against evil associations as the first step in an evil way the warning of this verse is directed.

Blessedness comes also from ignorance of the depths of sin to which humanity can descend. If we read the records of human guilt we grow sick and faint at the depth of depravity therein revealed. Dark, however, as the picture thus presented may be, it fails to bring the truth home to our souls with such clearness as will participation in the sin. One of the elements in our Saviour's suffering and agony was his knowledge of the nature, extent and consequences of the fall. From this knowledge, which comes from intimate acquaintance, the just man is spared because he avoids associations that are evil. He is fortunate, in part at least, that he is spared such knowledge.

To this we may add another element of abiding blessing springing from this source, viz: the possession of an unsoiled consciousness. This is essential to unalloyed happiness. It is a joy unspeakable and akin to glory to let thoughts and desires flow unhindered along the ways of purity. This must be one of the elements of heavenly bliss. And, by contrast, how sad and awful the moment when the soul first feels the soiling touch of sin. What keen suffering starts up in the soul when the impure consciousness is roused by contact with evil. Instinctively, the soul thus affected seeks the darkness as Adam and Eve sought the recesses of the garden. As the coal, though it may not burn, will leave its mark, so evil, though it may not destroy, will render the soul unfit for the communion and blessedness for which God made it.

## (2) A WELL-PLACED LIFE.

The second and third verses show us a life in the midst of favoring conditions. The elements of blessedness here set forth are essential to true life. The second verse describes a man in right relations to the Word and Law of God. The heart finds joy in meditating upon the law. It is the delight of the good man's heart. Of that word, in its aspects as promise or command, he can truthfully say, "O how love I thy Law." In his meditation upon it, God speaks to his soul. When he comes to its consideration he is lifted above the earth and earthly things. In this holy communion the truth becomes a part of his life—is incorporated into the very fiber of his being. The law delights him. He obeys it and his life henceforth moves along the line of God's purposes.

Eternal forces are at work for him. In active effort among men, as well as in the inner recesses of his soul, he begins to realize that he is in the place of blessing.

It is not strange, then, that his condition on the earth should be likened to that of a "tree planted by the rivers of water." How suggestive the figure! To him by secret and open agencies supplies for life are continually moving. He remains in safety in the midst of opposing forces. The mid-day sun cannot blast his blossoms nor the heated sands of the desert dry up his roots, for from beyond these and through these cometh his help. No matter how seemingly unfavorable his surroundings, he can always lift up his eyes unto the hills in the consciousness that his help is sure.

Nor is it to be wondered at that the life so situated should have the bliss of growth and fruitage. Such results are to be expected. "His fruit in his season." Seasons for growth and growth made. Season for fruit and fruit gathered. Our conception would hardly be realized if these seasons were not found to coincide and to be unending. The next phrase warrants this interpretation, "His leaf also shall not wither." Unending growth and continued fruitfulness. The fruitful season, the unwithered leaf; surely these words warrant the next; they almost seem themselves to say, "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The Lord withhold no good thing from him. It is measured unto him again, good measure, pressed down and running over.

## (3) ESCAPE FROM THE DOOM OF THE UNGODLY.

"The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." The judgment, the congregation of the righteous, these are presented to us in the figure of an open threshing floor swept by every wind of heaven. Only that which is worth preserving remains. The worthless is caught and carried swiftly away. A part of the blessedness of the righteous comes from the assurance that he shall stand in that day. That the testings of judgment, though they are brought to bear upon him, shall leave him where they found him—waiting the garner. Though he sorrow over the loss that must fall upon some, the stress of that dread day will drive from him every thought save that of thanksgiving to the Saviour of his soul.

## (4) GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE WAY.

"The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." We get a very humbling view of ourselves when we remember that God knows all about us. It is, however, a good thing to be humbled. The righteousness that we can feel pride in we ought to be made to see is only filthy rags. We must learn as a condition of true blessedness that all self-prompted activity is only "deadly doing." To know that God knows all about us will lead us to sing with new meaning:

"For nothing good have I  
Whereby thy grace to claim."

With the sense of unworthiness comes the comforting, uplifting thought that it is not our righteousness, but the righteousness of our perfect Lord that God knows. There can be no doubt about that righteousness, either in God's mind or our own. He sees us in Christ. Our life, our way is hidden in him who is our life. When God looks upon us he sees not the soiled garments of self-righteousness, but the spotless, seamless robe. What God knows is not the weak and troubled life of earth, but that life which Jesus has, and we shall have when we see him as he is.

"The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." This knowledge is something more than mere acquaintance with the facts of our experience. God knows all about the sinner. But the sinner perishes. We are saved. It must mean, then, that God's knowledge here means acknowledgement there. He who has known the way will receive those whom he has known in the way. Around this verse gather many assurances concerning the future. He will receive us as a father. That is a very touching picture of the father in the parable of the prodigal: "But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." We have been afar off, but our way leads homeward now. The Father's eyes are on us. He will come forward to meet us. Perhaps as great surprises will greet us as met the prodigal. It would be an infinite blessedness to hear his loving command, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## Christ's Coming Kingdom.

It is certainly a very marvelous enterprise which our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken. The salvation of a single soul involves a miracle. The

salvation of myriads upon myriads of the human race; what shall I call it but a mountain of marvels? The removal of the darkness which has settled over mankind in ten fold night—what a divine labor! The ending of the enmity which exists between man and God, the reconciling of man unto his Maker—what a design! The redeeming of this world from the bondage of corruption, the setting up of a kingdom of truth and holiness—what an enterprise! Such wonders has Jesus undertaken, and such wonders he will achieve. He dies to lay the foundation of his all-conquering kingdom, and he still lives that his kingdom may be established in its supremacy, and all nations may flow to it. Beloved, I fail to conceive, much more to express, the vastness of the task he has undertaken. Those of you who love your fellow-men often mourn your powerlessness with a single individual. What hard work it is to deal with our own countrymen! How are we baffled by their poverty, their ignorance, their misery, their sin! You have only to battle with a single vice—drunkenness, to wit—to feel what a monster is to be overcome. Only think for a moment of the social impurity of this city, and you are sick at heart as you remember it. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has come to cleanse this Augean stable; and he will cleanse it. The stream of the river of life shall run through the fouled parts of the earth till even those horrible regions which are comparable to the Dead Sea shall be reclaimed.

The problem staggers us. The systems of evil are colossal. The hold of evil on the race is terrible. Man is inveterately a sinner. You cannot cure him of rebellion—he is desperately set on mischief. Even when the consequences of his sin wound and afflict him he still returns to it. If you prove to him a demonstration that a thing is right and profitable, he does therefore love it; if you prove it to be injurious, he therefore chooses it. By the use of an accused logic he puts darkness for light and light for darkness, and thus stultifies his conscience, and hardens his heart. If, perchance, you convince his judgment, you have not won his affection, you have not carried his will, you have not subdued his mind. Nothing but Omnipotence itself can save a single soul. What must be that mighty power which shall cause nations to run unto the Lord! They that dwell in the wilderness are to bow before him, and his enemies are to lick the dust. What a conquest this! How shall Ethiopia be made to stretch out her hands to him? Look how black are the hearts of the inhabitants, as well as their faces! How shall China and Hindoostan, becloud by their false philosophies, be led to own the truth? Look you, sirs, look at this great mountain, and do not underestimate its mass; and then remember that before our Zerubbabel it must and shall become a plain. The stone mentioned by Daniel, cut out of the mountain without hands, smote the monstrous image and brake it, and in due time filled the whole earth. In the night visions the same prophet saw the Son of Man having dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people should serve him. So must it be. But how great a thing it is!—*Spurgeon.*

## The Old Doctor's Story.

"I have a story to tell you, boys," the old Doctor said to the young people the other evening. "One day—a long, hot day, it had been, too—I met my father on the road into town. 'I wish you would take this package to the village for me, Jim,' he said, hesitating. Now I was a boy of twelve, not fond of work, and was just out of the hay-field, where I had been at work since day-break. I was tired, dusty, and hungry. It was two miles into town. I wanted to get my supper, and to wash and dress for singing-class. My first impulse was to refuse, and to do it harshly; for I was vexed that he should ask me after my long day's work. He was a gentle, patient old man. But something stopped me—one of God's good angels, I think. 'Of course, father, I'll take it,' I said heartily, giving him my package. 'Thank you, Jim,' he said. 'I was going myself, but somehow I don't feel very strong to-day.' He walked with me to the road that turned off to the town, and as he left me he put his hand on my arm, saying again 'Thank you, my son. You've always been a good boy to me, Jim.' I hurried into town and back again. When I came near the house I saw a crowd of the farm-hands at the door. One of them came to me, the tears rolling down his face. 'Your father!' he said. 'He fell dead just as he reached the house. The last words he spoke were to you.' I am an old man now, but I have thanked God over and over again, in all the years that have passed since

that hour, that those last words were 'You've always been a good boy to me.' No human being ever yet was sorry for love or kindness shown to others. But there is no pang of remorse so keen as the bitterness with which we remember neglect or coldness which we have shown to loved ones who are dead. Do not begrudge loving deeds and kind words, especially to those who gather with you about the same hearth. In many families a habit of nagging, crossness, or ill-natured gibing, gradually covers the real feeling of love that lies deep beneath. And after all, it is such a little way that we can go together."

## Danger in a Thunder-Storm.

The chief danger incurred by human beings and other living animals is due to their bodies being better than some objects, although they are bad conductors in the sense that they afford considerable resistance to electrical discharges passing through them, and therefore give rise to the development of heat and molecular disturbance. A man standing, walking or riding upon an open plain during a thunder-storm is in a dangerous position, because his body is apt to be made a stepping-stone or the discharge, offering less resistance to it than the air. The danger is increased by the near presence of large masses of metal in the ground. Dry, low-lying positions are safer than such as are elevated and exposed. The close neighborhood of water-courses should always be avoided. It is better to lie flat upon the ground than it is to stand or sit. If shelter is near, the individual should get at once completely under cover. To stand under the lee of a house, wall, hay-stack, or thicket of trees is more dangerous than to remain altogether exposed in the open. The inside of a barn or out-house, well away from the walls, is comparatively safe. A distance of two or three yards away from the trunks and branches of trees is a comparatively safe position; but to lean against the trunk of a tree during a thunder-storm, to remain as far as practicable, in the middle of the room, to avoid objects hung from metal chains, gilt frames, fire-places, looking-glasses with amalgamated backs, and iron pillars and balustrades.

## Among the Thousand Islands.

Indeed, among the islands one lives upon the water. By a certain tacit understanding between the islanders, every resident has a right to explore every other resident's petty domain. No obtrusive notice-boards flaunt before the innocent face of heaven the anti-social and wholly-uncalled for information that trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigor of the law. On the contrary, the usual formula painted on the neat little placard beside the tiny landing, stages assumes the optative rather than the imperative mood: "Parties landing on this island are requested to kindly abstain from damaging the ferns and flowers." The fact is, all the islanders are there as summer visitors only; each possesses but a tiny realm of his own, often beautifully varied, but always readily exhausted of its native interests; and the whole charm of the spot would evaporate entirely if proprietors insisted with ingrained British churlishness upon their legal right to shut themselves in from landless humanity with the effectual protest of a high brick wall. Accordingly everybody always lands freely, no man hindering, upon everybody else's private island; and the day is mostly passed in wandering (afloat) in a delicious, aimless, listless fashion down tiny channels between islet and islet, stopping here to pick up a rare wild-flower from a cliff on the side, and halting there to explore and climb some jutting rock whose peak promises a wider view over all the surrounding little archipelagoes.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

## Sound Theology.

The truth of man's fallen and lost condition underlies all aggressive theology and all Christian activity. Paul's teaching in his day was in keeping with the teaching of the prophets: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." Sin and utter misery and ruin in man's case, grace and sovereign mercy through Christ, on God's part, were the themes everywhere of Paul. Augustine, Calvin, and Luther taught the same. And it is this teaching which has done for the world what has thus far been achieved by Christianity. The living hymnody of the church in all ages embodies the same facts: Greek, Latin, German, English, French, Swiss and American, all unite their voices. The theology of Paul was the theology of

the Puritans, and the theology of the Puritans did much to build the American people into a great nation. The Pilgrim Fathers were all men of this right noble mould, and would as soon have thought of questioning their right to live and be as free as to entertain for a single moment a doubt of the inspiration of the word of God.—*Secord and Trowel.*

## God's Methods.

God has many methods of showing us his ways. He teaches by his word, which is as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and by which the man of God may be so taught as to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In that word we find the fullest and most careful instruction. It meets us at every point in our existence, and by general and comprehensive direction shows us the way in which we should go. He shows us also by his Holy Spirit, which guides us into all truth, which shows us things to come, which instructs us in the things to come, which instructs us in the very wisdom of the Lord, which takes the things of God and shows them to us. He shows us by his providence, hedging the wrong path, opening the right way before us, warning us off from dangerous places, opening before us ways of pleasantness and paths that are peace. He shows us sometimes by affliction. If we refuse to hear instruction, he makes us to "hear the rod," to know what he would have us to do, and do it from the heart.

## Forgiveness.

The first joy the Christian feels is the knowledge of his sins forgiven. A little girl knelt to pray, but a memory of a wrong done that day came between her soul and Christ. She had disobeyed her father. She rose and went to his room. "Papa," said she, as the tears filled her eyes and choked her voice, "I have come to tell you something that I did that was wrong to-day. I want to ask you to forgive me." "My dear child," was the answer, "I do not want you to tell me; I forgive you freely without." He dried away her tears and sent her back rejoicing. As she knelt once more for her heavenly Father's blessing the readiness of her earthly father to forgive her was to her a type of the divine forgiveness. She realized that "God pardons like a father who kisses the offence into everlasting forgetfulness."

## Circling Up.

The Rev. Sam Jones was speaking of growing in grace, and of a religion that made men kind, and concluded by saying: "That is what we want—lovetoward God and love toward man. It is said that the larks of Scotland are the sweetest singing birds on earth. No piece of mechanism that man has ever made has the soft, sweet, glorious music in it that the lark's throat has. When the farmers of Scotland walk out early in the morning, they flush the larks from the grass, and as they rise they sing, and as they sing they circle, and higher and higher they go, circling as they sing, until at last the notes of their voices die out in the sweetest strains that earth ever listened to. Let us begin to circle up and sing as we circle, and go higher and higher, until we flood the throne of God itself, and the strains of our voices melt in the sweetest sympathy with the music of the skies."

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