

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 30TH, 1897,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, October 22nd, 1885.

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”—Luke xviii. 1.

My mind alights with great joy upon the simple truth which gleams on the very surface of our text,—then, *men may pray*. If men ought to pray, they may pray. Whatever a man ought to do, it is clear that he has the right and the privilege to do; and though this may seem a very common-place truth to those of us whose hearts are at ease through faith in Jesus, and who enjoy daily communion with God in prayer, yet there is an exquisite sweetness about this fact to a man who fears that he may not pray. He has come into such a miserable state of heart that he feels as if he could not pray, and he fears that he may not pray. Satan tells him that the door of mercy is shut against him, that his day of grace is over, and that the time of hope for him is now past and gone. But our text says, “Men ought always to pray.” Then, men may always pray. Your knee may be bent before the altar of God, though it be stained through many a fall into sin. Though it is many years since you ever thought of praying, yet you may pray. Though, perhaps, you have even denied that there is a God, still you may pray; though you have ridiculed the very notion of prayer, you may pray; God does not refuse to you the permission to come to his mercy-seat. Though you have committed every crime in the catalogue of sin, you may pray; and though you have gone on in those crimes, and involved yourself yet more and more deeply in iniquity, you may pray. Though you be within a few days of death and of damnation unless the grace of God shall visit you, yet you may pray. It is clear that you may pray because men ought always to pray, and what they ought to do they may do. Grasp that truth, O despairing one, and grip it fast, and say thou to despair, “Get thee far from me; it is not possible that I am denied the right of praying

unto the Lord while such a text as this still stands in Holy Writ, 'Men ought always to pray.'

Now, just look at the text again, and lay stress upon the first word of it: "*Men* ought always to pray." I feel so grateful to the Holy Spirit that this text does not say, "Saints ought always to pray," because then I might ask myself, "Am I a saint?" and perhaps I might have to answer, "No, I am far from it." But the text does not say, "saints," and it does not even say, "Tender-hearted, penitent persons, who are in a very gracious state, ought always to pray." No, there is no description of character given in the text, for which I am deeply grateful. Those exhortations that leave the character as wide as possible are all the more full of grace and condescending love.

Who ought always to pray, then? "*Men*." And the word "*men*" is generic, and includes the race. "*Men*." That is, men and women and children; old men and fathers, young men and maidens, all who belong to the race of mankind ought always to pray. Perhaps you say, "So-and-so is not a good man." No, but he is a man; and men ought always to pray. He is a long way from being a commendable man, a man of mark, a man of note, a nobleman in the truest sense of that term. Ah, but he is a man; and men ought always to pray! Go down the back streets into the dark alleys, where there are men who scarcely seem to be men, and women who are scarcely women, and tell even them that they are still included under this head. "Men ought always to pray." Go upstairs, and stand by the bed where death has his victim by the throat; the man yet living is still a man, that poor creature lying there is not yet a corpse, but still a man. Say to him, "Men ought always to pray." They who curse and swear ought always to pray; they who live without any regard for God, or even in disbelief of his existence, and detestation of his gospel, yet they ought always to pray; and, as I said at the beginning, the "*ought*" implies a permission; for, what a man ought to do, he may do; and, therefore, whoever thou mayest be, if thou art in the shape of a man, thou oughtest to pray. If thou hast a head on thy shoulders, and lungs that heave, and a heart that palpitates,—if thou art still in the land of the living, and can be numbered amongst the sons of men,—to thee this text rings out a grand and glorious gospel. Even though it seem to be put in the form of a law by the use of that stern word "*ought*", yet it really is in the form of the gospel; thou mayest pray if thou art either man or woman, if thou art of the race of mankind, for "*men* ought always to pray."

Oh, that some poor heart might catch at this sweet word! That woman talked of throwing herself over London Bridge; yet even *she* may pray. That man thought of crossing the Atlantic, and hiding himself from his fellow-men, leaving his kith and kin, to get away from the place where he has dishonoured his name. Do not think of such a thing, my dear sir, but pray; for you may pray. There is not in heaven or earth anything that forbids you to pray. There is an act of amnesty and oblivion passed in the court of God, and you are not excepted from it. There is no book inspired of him that denies you a place at the mercy-seat. There is no messenger sent of God who will say to you, "Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not pray;" but, on

the contrary, bringing before you the living and inspired Word of the living Christ of God, we say to you, "Men ought always to pray," therefore *you* ought to pray, and therefore you *may* pray.

Now let us turn the text round a little, and put the emphasis on another word: "Men ought *always* to pray." Therefore, men may pray now. If they ought always to pray, they ought now to pray; and if they ought now to pray, they may now pray. Is not that a precious, blessed truth? Here you sit, poor sinner, and I am talking to *you*. Never mind that very respectable person who is sitting next to you; I am not just now thinking of her, I am not speaking to him; I mean *you*, poor, sad, guilty one. Perhaps you say, "I do not feel in a state of mind in which I can pray. I hardly know why I came in here; but I am very sad, I am very troubled, I am very sinful, I am very hard-hearted." But, my dear friend, you may pray. Let me stop a minute; in this solemn silence, you may breathe your first prayer to God. May God help you, my poor brother, to say for the first time, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" May he help you, my dear sister, who have lived so long without prayer, now to say, "Lord, receive me, and forgive me, and let me be thy daughter, thy child, henceforth and for ever!" Do you not see this? If men—and you are in that category,—if human beings ought always to pray, then they may always pray; and "*always*" must include this present moment. So *you* may pray *now*, you ought to pray now; for you are in the list of men. Therefore, do pray now, for "now" must be included in the word "always." "Well," says someone, "I will hasten home, and pray." Do not do that; sit where you now are, and let your soul breathe itself out to God. "But I would like to get down on my knees." Yes, I would like that you should if it were fit and proper; but there is no need of it. Get on the knees of your soul. Many a time, when the body is on its knees, the soul is not really praying; and there is a way in which the soul can be prostrate before God even though the body stands. Even now, into the very dust I throw my own spirit before the thrice-holy God; and, prostrate before him, I pray, "Lord, help some who are here now to pray to thee! For the first time in their lives, even now, while these words are escaping from my lips, may their hearts confess their sin, and cry unto thee, great Father, for the exercise of thine infinite mercy." Why should it not be so? I believe that the Spirit of God is at work here at this moment, and is leading some of you into this blessed act of prayer; if so, let his name be praised for it.

There is one thing more to be noticed before I plunge into the text, and that is, "Men ought always to pray, *and not to faint*." Then it is clear that prayer is always—if it be true prayer,—an effectual and profitable exercise to any man who prays; for, if men ought to pray, it is plain that there is something in prayer that is helpful to the spirit, for men ought not to do that which is a mere vain and empty thing. God cannot require us to do that which will end in smoke, or which will be a mere nothing; God does not ask any of us to go and talk to the winds and whistle to the waves. There must be some reality in prayer, it must be his intention to hear and to answer prayer, or else he would not put it thus, "Men ought

always to pray." Would he give us permission to do a thing that would have no value in it whatever? Nay, would he exhort us to do it, would he command us to do it, when he knew that, if we did it, it would 'just be a mere form? Does God send us to act like the daughters of Danaus, to fill a bottomless vessel with leaking buckets? Does he give us, like Sisyphus, to spend our lives in rolling a huge stone up the hill, which will only roll back again upon us? Does he make fools of us? Has he spoken in secret, and said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain"? It cannot be. I hold that, if God does not hear and answer prayer, it is a piece of foolery; and I cannot conceive that God would set any of us to do what would be an insane, or at least an idiotic thing. No; if men ought always to pray, there is something real in prayer; and, when the Lord says that we ought to pray, it is because he stands ready to grant the desire of our hearts, and to send us away with a blessing.

I. With this preface, dear friends, we come to our text; and I notice concerning it, first, here is A PERPETUAL DUTY, OR PRIVILEGE, or both: "Men ought always to pray."

It means, of course, first, that *men ought to pray habitually*. There should be—and where the grace of God is, there will be, the habit of prayer. There will be the prayer at set times. It is necessary to mark out the plots in the garden, to keep them from the path where you walk, so that growing plants may not be trodden down by the busy feet of toil. We want some set times, some little enclosures, some hours and periods marked off for prayer. These should be regularly attended to. Our private prayers,—it is a great loss to our souls if these be ever neglected. Our family prayers,—I am sure it is a grievous injury to a Christian household if it be not gathered regularly for prayer. Our prayers in the house of God amongst our brethren, too, must not be forgotten. We love the assemblies for prayer; we have given heed to the apostolic injunction, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." All these things ought ye to have done, yet there is a habit of prayer that is higher than all this. The Jews prayed three times a day. There have been some holy men who have prayed at least seven times a day; but I take it that the man who lives near to God could not tell how many times a day he prays, for, whether he has three or seven times of special and notable prayer in word, he will have seventy times seven times in a day in which his heart speaks with God about everything that occurs. I think that it is well before every action to breathe a prayer, and during every action to breathe a prayer, and after every action to breathe a prayer. "Salt," says the Old Testament, "without prescribing how much." So is it to be with prayer,—prayer, without prescribing how much. You can never overdo it. Possibly those matters which appear to require least prayer are the very things which require most prayer. "Men ought always to pray." You do not have to leave off your business to pray, or turn aside from domestic labour or public service, all of which must be attended to; you can do that and pray just the same, and this is the way in which Christians always should pray.

But I do not think that this text so much intends to teach the

continuity of prayer as the pertinacity of prayer; I mean, not so much the always praying as the keeping on praying for any particular thing that you have asked for. You are to continue to pray. Let me try and open this up a little. "Men ought always to pray;" that is, to pray *under all circumstances*. Whatever the difficulty or the trouble is, pray about it. It is a domestic trouble; pray about it. It is a business trouble; pray about it. It is a church difficulty; pray about it. I wish to bear my personal witness upon this matter. I have had, and I still have, more burdens to bear, I think, than any other man who lives;—heavy burdens, not my own, but for others and for God's glory,—that which daily comes upon me, the care not only of this huge church, but of so many other churches as well; and I have found that I never have a burden of any sort but it is my wisdom at once to—

"Take it to the Lord in prayer."

I have had burdens that have so troubled me that I have been quite baffled. I have thought my best, and I have done my best, but the trouble has remained; and, at last, I have taken it bodily, and put it up on the shelf, and I have said to the Lord, "I will never touch that trouble again, I will leave it in thy hands, my blessed Master." I believe that, generally, it has been the best mode of dealing with it, to put it entirely into his hands. There are certain things for which, after having done all else that can be done, the only remedy is prayer.

Let it be definitely accepted among us Christian people that, whatever the difficulty is, whatever shape it takes, secular or sacred, "Men ought always to pray;" that is, they ought to *pray about everything*. This is the remedy that will cure all diseases; this is the sword that shall cut the Gordian knot if it cannot be untied; this is the key that fits the wards of every lock in the prison-house of our sorrow. We shall get clean out if we do but know how to use the key of prayer. "Men ought always to pray." There may be a brother who is likely to make discord; shall I go and battle with him? No, I will tell the Lord about him; he will deal with him better than I can. Oh, but that man has begun to preach flat heresy! Shall I have a fight with him? Well, I may controvert with him if I am driven to it; but I will first tell the Lord about him. The Lord can settle him far better than I can. "Straightforward makes the best runner." Instead of going round to the servant, and trying to curry favour with him, go straight to the Master. Go at once to head-quarters about everything. "Men ought always to pray." Oh, to learn this lesson well!

And, dear friends, we ought to pray *under all oppositions to prayer*. Sometimes we say to ourselves, "Really, I could not pray about that matter." Well, then, if you cannot pray about it, do not have anything to do with it; it is a sure sign that there is a leprosy in it, so touch it not. The cankerworm of hell is in it if you cannot pray about it; flee from it as you would from Gehenna itself. It must be a foul and filthy thing that you cannot pray about. Nay, beloved, there cannot be such a thing; but, whatever seems to be in the way of your praying, believe that, whenever it is hardest to pray, it is most necessary to pray. Whenever it seems to you that you cannot pray, then you must say, "Now I have seven times more need to pray about

this thing than I have about other matters in which prayer comes more easy to me." It is a danger signal when you cannot pray. It is the rattle of the rattlesnake when you cannot pray; there must be some deadly mischief near at hand. Whatever the difficulty in prayer, you must, by the help of the Divine Spirit, break through all barriers, for you must pray.

"Men ought always to pray." Then they ought to pray *even if there has been a long delay in answers to their prayers*. I demur very greatly to the practice of some of whom I have read, who have set God a certain time during which they will pray. I have heard of a woman who said that she would pray for her husband for twenty years, and, according to the story, at the end of twenty years he was converted; but if he had not been converted just then, it would have been at her peril to leave off prayer, even at the end of the twenty years. Our dear brother, Mr. George Müller, has on his "prayer-book" the name of a brother for whom he has prayed, I think I heard him say, some six-and-thirty years. That was some years ago; so it must be a longer time than that now, unless, indeed, the prayer has been answered; but he has the inward persuasion that this person will yet be brought to the Saviour's feet, and therefore he daily mentions the case before God in prayer. By the way, he tells us of a very admirable plan of his for booking his requests in prayer, and marking them off as they are heard; and those that are not answered he lets stand until, in process of time, he finds that some of them were not proper requests, and he puts that against them; but he finds that God does hear prayer, and he likes to keep a record of it. If we did the same, we should have much more holy common-sense confidence in God, and our praying would be a more business-like matter as, indeed, it ought to be. But do not say to yourself, "I shall pray just so long for this thing." If what you are asking for touches the kingdom and the glory of Christ, persevere in the prayer with this text to encourage you, "Men ought always to pray."

If it be something which concerns only *your own personal comfort*, then God's Spirit may teach you to limit your prayers. "Concerning this thing," said Paul, "I besought the Lord thrice." Yes, and then he had not the answer that he desired; but he had one with which he was perfectly satisfied. The Lord did not take away the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, but he said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul had still to bear the trial, but he received from the Lord the grace to enable him to bear it. Ask with 'bated breath when thou art asking something temporal for thyself; for thou art but as a silly child in that which relates to thyself. A boy might fall in love with his father's razor, or wish to eat some delicacy that would be most dangerous to his health, and thou wouldst not have thy child persisting in asking for that which would injure him. Thou art not angry with him for asking, for he knows no better; but thou sayest, "My child, that would not be good for thee!" If thy son be a good child, he will not ask again, or, asking, he will not be angry if he be refused. So, often, thou knowest not what is good for thee. If God had really put it within our reach to have whatever we chose to ask for, it would be a very dangerous power indeed. If the Lord should say

to me, "You may have whatever you wish for," I would straightway get me to my chamber, and say, "O my Father, divest me of this dangerous privilege! I ask thee, of thy tender mercy, never to give me anything which thy great wisdom does not see to be good for me. Do not trust me with so dangerous a power as this. Thou art omniscient, and I am foolish; thou art altogether good, and thy will for me is better than my will for myself can ever be. Not, then, as I will, but as thou wilt, let it be done unto me." But if it is anything concerning the kingdom of Christ, anything for the glory of God, continue in prayer, even though it be for fifty years, and let this little sentence cheer thee, "Men ought always to pray."

Pray on, also, dear friends, *despite all temptations and all personal difficulties*. When thou feelest, "My prayer is dull and feeble," still pray. When Satan says, "There is no use in praying about that matter," still pray. When others round about thee say, "It is not a fit subject for prayer," still pray. When at last it seems to be despairing work, and you have to cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up the bowels of his compassion?" still do thou pray, for "Men ought always to pray."

II. Now I must say just a few words upon THE GROUND OF THIS OBLIGATION: "Men ought always to pray."

Well, we ought always to pray because *we have always some sin to confess*, we have always *some good thing for which to bless God*, and we have always *some want that needs to be supplied*. I must own that I have never yet been in a condition in which I did not need to pray. He who is down in the valley needs prayer that he may be able to climb the hill; he who is up the hill needs to pray twice as much that his head may not grow dizzy, and that he may not fall from his high position. He who hath not should pray till he hath, and he who hath should pray that he may be blessed in the having. If thy cup be empty, pray the Lord to fill it; if thy cup be full, pray God to make thy hand steady that thou spill not its contents. If thou canst not see thy way, pray God to guide thee. If thou canst see thy way, pray God to help thee to follow it. Art thou young? Pray God to help thee against the sins of youth. Art thou in the middle of life? Pray God to help thee in the middle passage, where trials are so numerous. Art thou almost into heaven with age? Pray that thou mayest enter heaven with prayer. "Men ought always to pray." It is always an incumbent duty for one or other of these reasons.

Men ought always to pray *because God commands them to pray*. "Pray without ceasing," is a clear, clean-cut command. There is no getting over that passage, "Pray without ceasing." It lies wrapped up within the bowels of the first commandment of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

"Men ought always to pray." *It is always the wisest thing they can do*. "Men ought always to pray." It is sometimes the only thing that they can do. "Men ought always to pray;" or else, they take the matter out of God's hand. "Men ought always to pray," for they always need God's help, whether they think they do or not.

III. I will not go into further reasons, though there are very

many, for this obligation; but I shall close by noticing THE ALTERNATIVE: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." If you do not pray, you will faint.

There are some who faint fatally. They set out upon the Christian profession; perhaps there are some here who once did that. Years ago, you were a member of a church; where are you now? Years ago, you used to speak sometimes on the village green in the name of Christ; you do not do that now. How have you come to be where you are,—either not even making a profession of religion, or certainly doing nothing in Christ's service? I shall not make a guess, but I shall pronounce a certainty; you went wrong, and you began to faint in your spiritual course, because you-restrained prayer. You fainted because you did not pray. Ah, a religion that does not begin with secret prayer is not worth the label you put upon it! A religion that is not sustained by secret prayer is a lie. A religion that does not grow through secret prayer may be puffed up, but it is not truly built up by the hand of God. No, no, young man, if you seek to join a church, to be baptized, to come to the communion table, and all the while you do not pray, your religion is but the baseless fabric of a vision, and will disappear. We have had a great many men whom I have seen and known at different times, who could speak very fluently, and did labour in the service of God for a while, but the great mischief with them was that they did not live to God in private. If it is so with any of you, your religion may be built up very loftily, like some high tower; but it will come down very speedily because the foundations have been badly laid. You must either pray or you will faint.

If you are a child of God, the same alternative lies before you. You will either pray or faint; that is to say, sometimes *you will get bewildered*. I do. I wish to do the right thing, but scarcely know which is right out of twenty things. I would deal with this brother kindly, and with that other brother firmly. How shall I mix firmness and kindness? If you are pastor of a church,—and you may be, my dear friend,—you know how many puzzles we have before us in dealing not only with our own poor human nature, but with the human nature of God's people, for there is a lot of human nature even where there is spiritual nature, and there are very queer odd ways even in good men. What are you to do in such cases? Well, if you cannot go back within the veil, and speak with the Holy Oracle, you will faint. I have before told you that when I was coming to London, there was a queer old man in the prayer-meeting who, when the people were praying that I might have a blessing in going, asked the Lord that I might be helped to "swallow bush-faggots crossways." That I have done many a time. Another prayed that I might be "delivered from the bleating of the sheep;" and, for the life of me, I could not make out what he meant. I am not sure that he understood it himself, but I quite understand it now. There is no leader of the flock who will not occasionally wish to be delivered from the bleating of the sheep, for they bleat such different tunes sometimes. You may listen to the bleating of one sheep and another, —some bell-wether, perhaps, that is not bleating in the right style;

but it is a great thing to feel, "Now, I am not going to be guided by the way these sheep bleat. I am set to guide them rather than to let them guide me, but I am going to be guided by a higher voice than the bleating of the sheep, namely, the voice of the Great Shepherd." I believe that every man who seeks to win souls—and I am addressing many who are in charge of Bible-classes, or at the head of Missions, or in some way serving the Lord,—will faint, I am sure he will,—in the management of his work unless he gets right out of it sometimes into prayer, and lays it all before the Lord, and waits upon him. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," in their ministry for God, in their service on behalf of the souls of their brethren. They will faint from very bewilderment if they do not pray.

And you will be sure to faint, at times, *through weariness and depression of spirit, through a sense of your own powerlessness.* "Oh!" you say, "would God I could give it all up! Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest!" It is a great mercy that the wings do not grow when we ask for them, for they would be of no use to us; what should we do, flying away like doves? If God had a message for us to carry like a pigeon, he would give us the wings, and then it would be right for us to fly; but what we generally mean is that we want to get away from hard work, we are looking for Saturday night. How do you like the workman who says, on Tuesday morning, "O sir, I wish it were Saturday night!" and when it gets on towards Thursday, he meets you, and says, "Good morning, sir, I wish it was Saturday night"? "Oh!" I think you would say, "next Saturday night will be the last I shall want to see you." You want a better workman than that; and if we get fainting in that style, we should say to ourselves, "Come, this will not do! I must go and tell the Lord all about my difficulty and my trouble." Wait upon him for fresh strength, and then you will come out as though you had bathed your face in the dew of heaven, and the light of God had entered your eyes, and you had come fresh from a vision of angels to talk with men with new tongues as the Spirit gave you utterance. "Wait, I say, on the Lord;" for this it is that will keep you from fainting, and make you to renew your strength like the eagle's.

I have come to deal with God's people in the close of my subject, but I almost wish I had not,—that I could have kept on in the first strain, and talked with those who are beginning to pray. Dear friends, do begin to-night, I pray you, with your eye on my Lord on yonder cross, all bestained with the streaks of crimson blood flowing down his precious body. Look at him; there is life in a look at him. Look at him as he dies for you, and you shall live; God help you so to do, for Christ's sake! And when you have believed in him, come and be baptized in his name, as these dear friends are about to be. God bless you all! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXLV.

I am going to preach about prayer, so we will read "David's Psalm of praise." Thus we shall have two parts of true worship.

Verses 1, 2. *I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.*

Notice how long David expected to praise God. He was going to praise God for ever, and then after that, "for ever and ever." "Every day will I bless thee,"—that is, when I do not seem to be partaking of any choice temporal blessing, I will still bless thee. When I sit like Job on the dung-hill, 'every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name,'—thy character, all that has to do with thee, 'for ever and ever.'

The first two verses are the preface of the Psalm; now the psalmist begins his music:—

3. *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;*

He is great without bound; let him be praised without end. There is no end to his greatness; let there be no end to our adoration.

3, 4. *And his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*

The fathers shall be the preachers to their sons, and the sons shall be the preachers to their sons. The flaming torch of Jehovah's praise shall be passed from hand to hand all down the centuries; as long as men shall live, God shall have the praise of the godly: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts."

5. *I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty,*

This is a beautiful expression: "I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty." It is a heaped-up expression. David was in an ecstasy of delight when he wrote it; he did not know how sufficiently to express his adoration of God. Other men might praise God for themselves, but that was not enough for David; he must take his own turn at the blessed business: "I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty,"—

5, 6. *And of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.*

"And I will declare." Yes, in comes David's personal note again; he cannot let the praises of God alone, he must take his full share in this heavenly task. I wish that, whenever there was work to do for God, or prayer to be offered or praise to be given to the Lord, you and I would always interject this personal pronoun, "and I." You know, perhaps, dear friends, that you never find Bartholomew's name by itself in any of the Gospels, it is always somebody else "and Bartholomew." It is well to be a good helper of other people; and when others are praising the Lord, it is good to come in as David did with the personal resolve and confession, "and I will declare thy greatness."

7. *They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,*

Mark every word in this choice expression: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness." They shall see this goodness, and they shall appreciate it as great goodness; they shall remember it, and so have the memory of God's great goodness; and then they shall speak of it: "They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness;" and when they have done so, they shall do it again and again: "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness."

7, 8. *And shall sing of thy righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion ;*

He has no passion, but he is full of compassion. What a mercy that is for us ! Sometimes we hear persons say that God cannot do this or that,—that he cannot feel, and cannot suffer. That is not true, for he can do anything that he likes. A god who has no feeling is a poor god, of no service whatever to us ; but “ the Lord is gracious and full of compassion ; ”—

8. *Slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

Oh, what a blessing it is for you and for me that he is slow to anger !

9. *The LORD is good to all : and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

Whether you search for the far-distant with a telescope, or peer into the minute with the microscope, the Lord's tender mercies are found everywhere. Like the light, without which you see nothing, so is the mercy of God ; it enlightens everything : “ His tender mercies are over all his works.”

10. *All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD ; and thy saints shall bless thee.*

“ Standing in the inner circle, ‘ thy saints ’ shall mingle their love with their praise, and so ‘ shall bless thee.’ Theirs shall be a choicer, tenderer worship than that of all ‘ thy works ’ besides.” The works of God are like a great organ, but it is man who puts his finger upon the keys, and brings forth all the music. Man is the interpreter of the universe ; he praises God as the inanimate creation can never do.

11. *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power ;*

I wish we did speak more of such subjects, and talk more upon these sacred themes. I do not think there is ever any deficiency of talk ; but I am afraid there is a very great lack of such talk as this : “ They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.”

12. *To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.*

See how David keeps to the subject with which he began the Psalm : “ I will extol thee, my God, my king.” Ay, and he sings about the King all through this Psalm. His great object is to make us see that there never was such a King as the infinitely-glorious Jehovah, who surpasses all the kings of the earth.

13. *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,*

Other kingdoms come and go ; they last during their little day, and then they vanish away. Look, for instance, at the kingdom of Alexander the Great, who only reigned for about twelve years, and when he died left no successor. We talk of great earthly monarchies ; they are but monarchies of an hour compared with the kingdom of Jehovah. Well might David say to him, “ Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,”—

13. *And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

What kind of a King is this whose kingdom is everlasting, and what are the acts that make him famous ? Notice the first thing he is said to do :—

14. *The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*

This is his glory ; this is the majesty of the King of kings, that he takes notice of the poor and weak. The compassion of God is to a great extent the glory of God. That he has such tender mercies toward the unworthy, is the subject of the loudest of our songs : “ Jehovah upholdeth all that fall ; ” that is, such as would fall were it not for his upholding. Jehovah lifts up all those who have fallen, and raiseth up those who are bowed down. Blessed be his holy name !

15. *The eyes of all wait upon thee ;*

What a King is this, who must needs feed all his subjects, and who must have all his subjects depend upon himself alone! "The eyes of all wait upon thee;"—

15. *And thou givest them their meat in due season.*

It is an act of grace, not of debt: "Thou givest them their meat." Did you ever think of the vast variety of the separate sorts of food that the Lord provides for each of the creatures he has formed? The meat that feeds an elephant would not feed a lion, that which feeds a lion would not feed a sparrow, that which feeds a sparrow would not satisfy the fish of the sea. To every creature God gives its own food: "Thou givest them their meat in due season." The fruits of the earth do not ripen all at once, but the various harvests succeed each other. Notice how each of the many flowers is full of honey just at the time when the particular insect which is to come down into the flower-bell is needing that nectar to feed upon. It is marvellous to see how God has timed creation to the ticking of a watch; and when the flower is ready, then comes the fly, the bee, the butterfly, or the moth, that shall be fed thereby. "Thou givest them their meat in due season."

16. *Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*

As men feed doves in their courtyard, carrying down to them their little handful of food, and opening the hand to pour it out, so does God feed all living creatures readily and easily enough by the simple opening of his hand. But he does it. He satisfies the desire of every living thing, and he will satisfy your desire, dear soul, if you take it to him. You say, perhaps, that you are very poor; well, then, cry to him, he has never failed his creatures yet, and he will not fail you. He hears the young ravens when they cry; and he will hear you, a man created in the image of God, when you cry to him.

17, 18. *The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*

As the omnipresent Deity, the Lord is not far from any one of us; but there is a peculiar nearness of God to his people,—a nearness of knowledge, a nearness of affection, a nearness of heart by which he looks upon them as his own special portion, his own peculiar heritage: "Jehovah is nigh unto all them that call upon him." That is the name of his people; they are a calling people, they are a praying people, and they pray to him "in truth." There are some who offer the mockery of pretended prayer, but God is not near to them in the special sense in which he "is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth."

19. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him :*

"He will fulfil"—he will fill full—"the desire of them that fear him." If you fear him, you need not fear any lack; indeed, you have nothing at all that you need to fear.

19, 20. *He also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserveth all them that love him : but all the wicked will he destroy.*

These two things always go together; as surely as the Lord does the one, he will do the other. While he preserves his saints, he will certainly destroy the wicked.

21. *My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD :*

God move us each one to do this! Then with the psalmist we may fitly say,—

21. *And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.*