

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH'S LIFE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.”—2 Chronicles xxxiii. 10, 11.

THE proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is, for God to speak to him, and for him to hear. Manasseh would not come that way: “The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.” Therefore, as God determined to save the rebellious king, he fetched him back by a rougher road; he sent the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took him among the thorns.

I am going to talk to you a little about the plain and proper road by which you should come to God, and then I shall deal with those who have gone among the thorns. There may be some such characters here to-night. Let me say that, if I should happen to describe anyone very correctly, I hope he will not do as a friend did the other Monday. He had come up to London, and I gave such an accurate description of him on the Sunday that he came in very indignantly to see me the next day, to know whether his wife had not written to me. He looked as if his wife and myself might both of us have rather hard times with him. When I assured him that I did not know his name, and had never seen him or his wife, or heard a word about him, he grew a little more calm; but the portrayal of him appeared to be so accurate that I could not help saying to him, “Surely God has spoken to you. Take the message home to yourself. Do not blame me or your wife; but blame yourself to think that such a description should apply to you.”

Now, first, as I have already told you, the proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is for God to speak to him, and for him to hear.

No. 2,385.

In Holy Scripture, God warns men. He tells them that sin is an evil thing, and that, if it is persisted in, it will bring endless ruin to them. Now, the proper thing for the man who hears that warning is to take heed to it, to run to the helm of his vessel, and steer the ship in another direction. God grant that you and I may not be as the horse and as the mule, that need bit and bridle; but may we listen at once to the warning so kindly given, and turn from every evil way!

Sometimes, God speaks by way of invitation. "Come to me," saith he. "Return to me. I am ready to forgive. I delight in mercy." Now, the proper way for one who hears this invitation is not to wait and linger, but to accept it at once. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord invites you to come to the ark to escape the flood, to come to the banquet to stay your hunger, to come to the sacred bath, that you may wash and be clean, as he of old did who washed his leprosy away in Jordan. Whenever God speaks to us in any way, let us listen, and, listening, let us obey, especially when he sets before us Jesus crucified, and says to us, "Trust in him, and you shall be forgiven. Accept the Great Sacrifice; believe that your sin was laid on him, and you shall be for ever clear of it." Oh, that you would accept him at once! We do not need to go round about, over hedge and ditch, to find the Saviour; there is the cross, look to it, and live. I was asking a friend, just now, concerning a sermon he had heard, and he said, "It was a very clever sermon; but if anybody had followed its teaching, he would not have been within six thousand miles of the cross of Christ." Well now, that is not what I want to do with you, to lead you thousands of miles away from Christ; but, as God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, I pray that you may accept him, and live by him. "Look unto me," says he, "and be ye saved."

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

May the Holy Ghost, whose word is, "To-day, to-day, to-day," speak with power to your hearts, that you may hear because God speaks!

You understand the way sinners are saved, do you not? "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We hear the gospel, we believe it, we live by it: there is the whole machinery of salvation. We preach a crucified Saviour, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life; yet we cannot beat it into men's heads that salvation is so simple as this. I remember how Martin Luther said that it was so difficult to get the doctrine of justification by faith into the minds of the Wittenbergers that he had half a mind to take the Bible, and beat them over the head with it. I am afraid that he would not have got the truth into their heads that way. "Look," said he, "if these sectaries come to you with a new doctrine, you stare at it, like a cow at a new gate; but when I bring you the gospel, you will not even look at it, much less will you receive it." Oh, that the Spirit of God would deliver us from such folly, that we may accept Christ, trust him, and live!

This is the happy way of salvation, to hear, believe, and live. Men go about to try and invent a salvation that makes its followers miserable; you must have so many wretched feelings, so much despair, so

many gloomy thoughts. No, no. The gospel message is, "Believe, and live." Why should men want to make their case worse than it is? It is already as bad as it can be. Why struggle to find an impossible addition to your present danger? Why try to import foreign and extraneous griefs into your already unbearable misery? I was trying once to explain the gospel to a young woman, so as to make it very simple to her; but she said, "Why, dear sir, I thought I was to feel a great deal! My father, before he found Christ, was so bad that he had to be put away in a lunatic asylum, and I thought I must be like he was." That is the rough way that many people think they have to travel; but the proper way, the Scriptural way is, "Come to Jesus, put your trust in him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This, then, is the happy way.

It is also an accessible way. If I preached to you that you must have so much despair, so much of terrible agony of soul, you might say, "I cannot go along that road. I am a young man full of spirit. I am a young woman with ruddy cheeks and happy heart. Must I be miserable in order to find Christ?" Ah, my dear friend, it is not so put! You will have, you must have, sorrow for sin. That, the Lord will give you; you have not to make it yourself, the Holy Spirit will work it in your heart if you yield yourself wholly to him. How often have I told you that, if you cannot come to Christ *with* a broken heart, come to Christ *for* a broken heart! If you have not a proper sense of sin, I do not expect that you ever will have it until the Holy Spirit gives it to you. Come to him, and trust him to work it in you. Remember that repentance does not come before faith; it is a kind of Siamese twin with faith. Which comes first I cannot tell, until you tell me which spoke in a wheel moves first when the whole wheel moves. Repentance is the lovely sister of faith, if it be not faith's first-born child. So you are not to repent first, and then to come to Christ. Bring nothing to the Saviour except your nothingness. Come to him empty, just as you are. In a short time, some of the fruits in our gardens will be ripening. Suppose we have a fine apple tree, or pear tree, with fruit on it, quite ripe. As you stand under it, you can imagine that you hear it talk. Trees have a language; shall I interpret what that tree is saying? It says, "Baskets, bring baskets." What for? Here is a basket; but I dare not bring it. "Why not?" asks the tree. Because it is empty. If the basket were full, I would bring it; but the tree will say to you, "I want empty baskets, that I may fill them with fruit." So Jesus wants nothing of you but your emptiness; and you may come to him just as you are; in fact, this is the only way to come to him aright. If you live in the country, where you have an old-fashioned well, do you ever say to yourself, "I dare not let this bucket down till I fill it"? Everybody would laugh at you if you talked like that; you let it down empty, that it may be filled. So let your empty soul down into the deep well of Christ's infinite merit, that it may be filled to the brim.

Thus, you see, this is a happy way, and it is an accessible way. You can come to Christ, can you not, in such a way as this?

It is, next, a way which has frequently been taken. Talking, some time ago, about the difficulties I had when coming to Christ, I said to

some brethren present, "They were self-made difficulties; they were not necessary, except it was that I might know the rough road in order that I might the better help others;" and I remember that our beloved and honoured brother, William Olney, said, "I never had such difficulties at all; I know nothing whatever about them. As a boy, I trusted in Christ, and I found peace with God at once." I believe that there are hundreds and thousands of earnest Christians, who simply come to Jesus without any particular pang of conscience, or grief of heart, and they are as truly in Christ as any of us, and their lives prove it. This is a way that has been frequently taken; all men are not fools, some do take the straight and narrow road that leads to everlasting life. I pray you, therefore, my dear unconverted hearer, especially you, young men, and you, young women, to enter the King's highway, which leads to glory everlasting. Hear while God speaks, believe what God says, and live for ever.

Is not this the gospel way? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Is it not the right way? Where else should we look but to our Saviour? What can we do but look, for we have nothing of our own to bring? Let us even now look out of ourselves to Christ, and live for ever. Would it not be a blessed circumstance if, without any further question about the matter, every unconverted man and woman here to-night would close in with Christ, crying, "I will perish, if I do perish, at the cross-foot. I will trust thee, Emmanuel, the unique Saviour, the one and only Interposer, the one Mediator, who can lay his hand on God by virtue of his own Godhead, and on man by reason of his manhood, and join us both together in a blessed league of endless amity"? May that be done for each one of you! Let the prayer go up from you who do know the Lord, you who can pray, "Lord, save the whole congregation!" What a congregation it is! Every Sabbath, morning and night, these masses gather here. Lord, why do they come if thou dost not intend to bless them? Shall they come up like waves of the sea, and then go rolling back again, and leave not a trace behind? No, rather may some precious pearls be washed up on the shores of salvation to-night that shall adorn the crown of Christ for ever and ever!

But now I come to the tug of war in the other side of my subject. When men reject this simple and easy way of trusting Christ, there and then the Lord might leave them; and if he did leave them, woe would be unto them. There is no greater curse than that solemn sentence, "Let him alone." But, instead thereof, the Lord begins to take men along a rough road. Let me read the text again: "The Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." Perhaps he will do the same with you, it may be that he is dealing thus with some of you; and here is the point where I thought it was likely that I might describe somebody's case very particularly.

I. First, THE LORD OFTEN ALLOWS TEMPORAL TRIALS TO TAKE MEN CAPTIVE. It often happens that God, with a view to the salvation

of men, sends to them temporal trials to capture them, as Manasseh was taken "*among the thorns.*" Is it so, my friend, that, after hearing the gospel for years, you are still unconverted, and that now God is beginning no longer to speak to you with words, but to deal with you by blows?

I have known persons in this case to find *everything going wrong with them in business.* It has seemed as if the current which had flowed toward them had suddenly dried up, or flowed backward. Do what they may, nothing prospers. There is a blight and a mildew on all their crops. They are disappointed where they had the highest hopes. Their speculations all turn out failures. Everything goes wrong. This is one of the black dogs with which the Good Shepherd fetches home his stray sheep; perhaps he is thus going to fetch you home, I pray that he may.

In the case of another, *the man finds himself out of work.* He has always been able before to bring in enough for the wife and the family, but now he is out of a situation, and cannot get employment. He has tramped the streets of London till he has worn out his boots, but he cannot find anything to do. The table had a very scanty meal upon it to-day; and this Sabbath has been a very sorrowful day in that home. We read of one, the other day, who destroyed himself because he could not bear to be so long without work. Do not so act, I pray you; oh, do not think of such an evil course as that! Rather say to yourself, "Here is another of the Lord's black dogs come after me; I would not go when the Shepherd called me, but he means to have me, and so I am being tried in this way." If, like Jonah's gourd, your hope withers, and you feel ready to faint, do not faint, but be of good courage; some of these rough waves may wash you on the rock. I am sure I pray that they may. Come and flee away, flee away, flee away now to the God who smites you in love. Kiss the rod, and yield yourself to him who holds it, for these troublous ways are often the very ones by which the Lord brings his exiled children home to his heart.

Sometimes, *God permits men to fall into very extraordinary troubles.* Some of you have read the life of Mr. John Newton. As a young man, you know how boldly wicked he was; but what a shameful thing it was for him, the son of parents who were able to support him in comfort, to be found on the Gold Coast, literally a slave, with scarcely a rag to cover his nakedness! Yet this severe discipline was necessary. He would never have been the Lord's free man if he had not been man's slave; if he had not been brought as low as that, he might never have looked up to God. I have known some people get into very strange circumstances, so remarkable that, if they were to describe them, they would hardly be believed; and I may be speaking to some such just now. Horror has taken hold upon you; your condition has become indescribable; yet perhaps this is the only point of view from which your eyes will begin to see your Saviour. It is strange that men should need to be flogged to Christ; but they do. If you will not come by the easy way, you shall come by the rough road; and if a call is not enough, you shall be made to smart, but you shall come, for the Lord means to save you. Yield to him, I pray you;

you have the hook in your jaws now, and the more you pull, the more that hook will tear, and the more you will be made to bleed; but the great Fisherman will never lose you. I have come with the landing-net, to see what can be done to get you safely on the bank. Oh, for almighty grace to make your sharpest trials the surest way of saving your soul!

Very frequently does it happen that persons are dealt with by *bodily affliction*. One said that he should never have seen Christ if he had not been blinded; it was only when his eyesight failed that, by faith, he looked to his Saviour. Another, who had lost both his legs, declared that it was the best thing that ever happened to him, for he could no longer go with his evil companions in the ways of amusement and folly, but he was brought to the house of God, and there the Lord met with him. So the doctor tells you that your lungs are affected, and he says he hardly thinks that you will recover. God is speaking to you somewhat roughly by that dread disease; but listen to its voice. Let the consumption warn you that your sin should be consumed. Many and many a time, headache and heartache have brought sufferers to their knees, and made them turn to God. If I am addressing any who are in the condition,—most pitiable and sad,—of being likely to end their days in the hospital, let me interpret to them the voice of God in this trying dispensation,—“Turn ye, turn ye to him that smiteth you; turn at once unto the Lord, and live.”

Another very likely means, by which God takes men among the thorns, and brings them to himself, is *the loss of dear friends*. A dying mother, in her death, has been mother in a spiritual sense to those whom she brought forth naturally. How often has a wife beckoned her husband to heaven! And the dear children of London, who die so numerous, are among the ablest missionaries of the cross. How they speak to the father's heart! How the mother is moved as she remembers little Jane, and the hymn she sang when she came home from Sunday-school, and what little Harry said about meeting mother with Jesus in heaven! God often brings men and women to himself by taking their children from them. There was a sheep that would not follow the shepherd, so he stooped down, and took the lamb up in his bosom, and walked away with it, and then the mother followed bleating after him. May it be so with all of you who have lost dear children! May you follow that gentle Jesus who has gathered your lambs into his bosom in heaven! But you do not want to lose your children, do you? No, and you do not want to lose your wife or your mother; then, follow Jesus without needing such trials.

In brief, all I have been saying amounts to this,—Take the old road by the cross of Christ; and do not need to have your path strewn with thorns. Come to Jesus just as you are, and come now. Spirit of God, draw them! I feel that my words are so feeble when I talk to you about this great salvation. What can I do? If you are to be saved, the arm of God must be revealed, and then the work will be done.

II. I am going now a step farther. Manasseh was not only taken “among the thorns,” but he was “*bound with fetters.*” So, THE LORD SOMETIMES PERMITS MEN TO BE BOUND BY MENTAL TRIALS.

All other trials put together can never be compared with mental

trials; I mean such as these. For instance, *when sin ceases to afford pleasure*. The man used to be a very jovial companion; he could sing a comic song, and he was fine company; but, on a sudden, he lost all that pleasure, and he cannot enjoy it any longer. If he is taken to the theatre, it seems all hollow to him. He went only a few nights ago; and when he came back, he said, "Pooh! call that amusement? It is worse than hard work." The very things that once made him all aglow with delight do not affect him now, nor cast a single ray of light on his path. He has lost all zest for that which he once loved in the way of sinning.

Beside that, *his daily avocation has become distasteful*. He used to take an interest in his business, but he has no pleasure in it now; it seems a mechanical drudgery, his life has turned into a treadmill, all hard work without an atom of joy. Friend, if this is your case, God is dealing with you. He knows how to pull your proud spirit down, he can bring your gaiety into the very dust, and you who danced and revelled, the other day, will mourn in sackcloth and ashes when he begins to visit you.

Worse even than this, *your old sins come out of their hiding-places*. You buried them long ago, you forgot all about them, you never thought of seeing any more of them; but now they haunt you, those ghosts of your former sins. You are like a man on one of the Russian plains when the snow has fallen deeply. The wolves, your old sins, are after you; you have tried to drive hard, and you have given up one habit after another to the wolves, but here they come! You can hear their howl behind you; you will have to give up something more, and on your speed, lashing the coursers of your resolution, yet you cannot escape from the cruel pack. They are upon you, they will tear you in pieces. Even when you are asleep, you hear them in your dreams. When you wake in the morning, you can still hear them. I recollect when, at night, I used to dream of hell, and when I woke in the morning, and all day long, I had a horrible remembrance of my past iniquities which I could not put away. Are you getting fettered like this? If so, I cannot say that I regret it; for, so long as you are saved, I shall not mind the roughness of the road if you will not come by a smoother one.

It may be that you have *great inability in prayer*. I heard you say, "Why, I can pray when I like!" Can you? "Oh! we have only to say, 'God have mercy upon us!' and all will be right." Yes, but you do not find it so now, do you? You have been praying; but you have not been heard. You have cried to God; but you find no peace. You have gone on pleading, and you have found no rest. This is where you are now, with an iron heaven above that reverberates with your cry. Ah! poor soul, yours is a sorrowful condition; but this is the way they must go who will not take the easier road to heaven. If God means to save you, he will save you even thus, as you will not hear his voice, and live.

I daresay, too, that now you feel *a great want of power to grasp the promises*. If, in preaching, I say anything dreadful, you will believe it, and take it home to yourself. If there is a threatening, you will cry, "Ah, that is true! That is true to me;" but when I utter a sweet word

of encouragement, you say, "Oh, I dare not take that! It would be too presumptuous;" and when a glorious promise is set before you, you say, "I wish that I could appropriate that, but it is too good to be true to me." I am only telling you what I have gone through myself; therefore I can speak, I was going to say, as one who knows every inch of the ground. Oh, what a fool I was that I did not believe in Christ the straight way, but that I must needs have to go round this road of learning my own nothingness, and powerlessness, and learning it by a painful and bitter experience!

And, dear friend, if I understand your position, you have a *fear of death and a dread of judgment upon you*. "Oh!" you say within yourself, "the wrath to come, the wrath to come!" It is no use for anybody to preach to you the new and false doctrine; you know very well that—

"There is a dreadful hell,"

for you have the premonition of it in your own conscience, and you cannot rest because of it. Well, well, this is the way by which the Lord will drive you to himself. The captains of the host of the king of Assyria have taken you among the thorns, and bound you with fetters, and brought you down to Babylon. You seem to be under the cruel dominion of Satan; you hear about Zion, but you are carried away to Babylon; you are an exile in a strange land.

There is one thing I want to say to you, and then I will turn away from this point. If you are in the power of the enemy, but you are not willingly there, you will get away from it. You remember Mr. Bunyan's description of Giant Slay-good. He would go up and down the heavenly road leading to the Celestial City, and lay hold of the pilgrims, one by one, to take them into his den, and to pick their bones; but Mr. Feeble-mind said that, if they did not come there willingly, and if they wanted to escape, they would escape. Now I want you to gather comfort out of that truth. You do not want to be a slave to Satan; you do not wish to remain in doubt and fear, do you? "Want to remain as I am?" say you, "I would give my right hand to get out of this cruel bondage; I would yield both my eyes with cheerfulness if the light of God might thereby come into my soul." You need not give up your hands or your eyes, and you shall not perish; you shall not die, but live. The Lord speaks comfort to you from this story of Manasseh in Babylon.

Listen to two or three observations, and then I will close. In order to your comfort and peace, first, *know that the Lord is God*. You did not know it, you refused to know it; but know it now. When the Lord comes to try conclusions with a man, and puts out his almighty power, it is not long before that man will know that Jehovah is God indeed. If we learn it quickly, as Manasseh did,—"*Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God*,"—it will be for our salvation; but if we are very slow in learning it, like Pharaoh was, we shall have to learn it all the same, but it will be to our destruction. "Who is the Lord? Who is the Lord?" asked Pharaoh. The Lord soon gave him an answer, for the water was turned into blood, and the frogs were even in his majesty's bed-chamber. "Who is the Lord?" Listen to the thunder; hear the rattling of the hail; sit still in the

darkness, the darkness that might be felt. Pharaoh began to make a shrewd guess as to who Jehovah was, and he pulled in his horns a good deal, and promised to yield this, and yield that; but by the time Jehovah's tenth bolt had been launched against him, and his first-born son was dead, then he knew who God was. Remember the result of that great battle, and see who it is against whom thou art contending. Throw down thy weapons, put an end to such a mad warfare; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, but let not a man contend with his Maker.

That done, *humble yourself before the Lord*, as Manasseh did. The lower you lie before God, the better; stretch yourself flat down upon his promise. Have no pleas, make no excuses. Down, sir, down! You cannot lie too low. Off with those feathers of pride. Remember how God said to the children of Israel, "Put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee." Fling away all thoughts of pride and human merit, and put a rope about your neck. Come before God like a condemned criminal, who only owes his present absence out of hell to infinite, unspeakable mercy. Now you are getting where God can bless you. It is impossible to pardon a man unless he is guilty; I insult him if I offer to forgive him for an offence he never committed. But you are guilty before God; then, confess your iniquity and transgression, and come before the Lord with penitent acknowledgments of all your wanderings out of the way of holiness.

What next? Well, do as Manasseh did, *begin to pray*. Cry mightily unto the Lord; but do thou this thing also, as I have twice bidden thee to-night, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and thou shalt be saved." I do not wonder that the Church of Rome puts up the cross everywhere. It becomes idolatry to worship a symbol; but if the symbol did no more than remind us of a crucified Saviour, that might be a different matter, for it is a crucified Saviour that we need always to remember. Christ died for sinners. Christ died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly." Now, look this way, look to Jesus. Do not look twenty ways, look only this one way. The Son of God, the Son of man, bore sin in his own body on the tree. I have often seen upon crosses in Italy these words, "*Spes unica*," the unique hope, the only hope of a sinner. Salvation is all in Christ; it is not what you are, nor what you ever will be; your hope lies in Jesus Christ, dead, buried, risen again, pleading at the right hand of God, coming again in glory. Rest you there, my beloved hearer, rest you there now, whether you have come by the old original right way, or have come over hedge and ditch as I did, through the thorns and through the sea. So long as you get to Christ, I care very little how you come. "What is the right way of coming to Christ?" said one. Well, if you get to him at all, any way is the right way; and, after all, there is no long journey to take to get to Christ. Where you are to-night, where you sit in that pew or those aisles, look to Jesus by faith, and the great transaction is done, and you are saved.

What do I mean by your being saved,—that you will thereby escape hell? You will do that, but I am not talking about hell just now; you will

escape from the power of sin; that is something far more to be thought of. You will escape from the love of sin, and from a life of sin. Holiness will be wrought in you. You will be born a child of God. May the Lord grant it to every one of you! If the Saviour were to say to me to-night, "I will give you every soul but one in the Tabernacle, and you are to pick out the one that is to be lost," I should not take one of those little girls over yonder; and, as I look round this gallery, I should not select any of you old gentlemen, nor the young ones either. Where should I find the soul that would be lost? I thank God that I am not condemned to make such a terrible choice as that; but, I pray you, do not make it yourself! Do not make it yourself! May God in mercy lead you to say, "If there is only one soul that will look to Christ to-night, I will be that one." While I stop a minute, look, *look*, LOOK. Look to Jesus, look and live; and to his dear name shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXXVIII.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

Remember, although this is a very sorrowful Psalm, it was written by a man of God. It will show you what a terrible thing sin must be, for even a child of God feels the smart of it very grievously. This is not the language of an unforgiven sinner; it is the cry of a saint who, for a while, has sinned, and is feeling the bitterness of his transgression.

Verse 1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:*

"If thou dost rebuke me, O Lord, do it gently! Be not very angry with me, for I cannot bear it, I shall die under it. O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath."

1. *Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

"Chasten me; it will do me good; it is needful; it is profitable; but not in thy displeasure, certainly not in thy *hot* displeasure." The man of God is more afraid of God's anger than he is of suffering. He does not object to affliction; what he does fear is any degree of the wrath of God in the chastisement.

2. *For thine arrows stick fast in me,*

Does God shoot at his own children? Yes, but only that he may kill the sin in them; and he knows how to make his arrows stick, and stick fast, too, in his own dear children. The Lord hates sin with a perfect hatred. Even when sin was laid on Christ, even though it was none of his, yet the Father forsook him. He will not endure sin anywhere; but he hates it most in those whom he loves most: "Thine arrows stick fast in me."

2. *And thy hand presseth me sore.*

As if God's hand pressed heavily upon the soul of David. I remind you again that this was a man of God who thus cried out. If any of you, who are not the children of God, are feeling the heavy hand of the Lord on account of your sin, do not wonder at it. If his own children do not escape the rod, he is not likely to spare you. See into what a terrible condition David came, as he tells us in the third verse.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger ;*

He felt as if his very flesh was decaying, rotting, dissolving, and that there was no soundness in it. When God deals with men in a way of anger, they cannot stand against him any more than the wax can resist the heat of the furnace. Beware, I pray you, that you provoke not God's eternal wrath in hell, for even here it is not to be borne; what will it be when mercy's gate is closed? "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger."

3. *Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.*

His very bones suffered through his sin. He could not rest, he turned over and over in his bed, but he could not find a place soft enough to lie upon in peace. Sin will make any man's bones ache when once his conscience is really quickened, and, with David, he will cry, "There is no rest in my bones because of my sin."

4. *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head :*

David was like a man who has sunk seven fathoms deep. Big waves of iniquity rolled over him, and he saw no light, no hope, no way of escape.

4. *As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*

It is a great mercy when sin is a burden; for, when it becomes too heavy for us to bear, Christ will bear it. A man is in an ill case when he finds no burden in sin, when he thinks he is quite able to bear it himself; but he, to whom sin is an insupportable, intolerable load, is already on the road to mercy. See how the psalmist goes on to show that his case is worse still.

5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*

He got to be so bad that he could not bear himself. His sorrow on account of his folly had made him feel as if he was a corrupt being, like one suffering with a foul cancer, unfitted for the company of his fellows: "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."

As I read that verse, it brings up memories of my own state of mind before I found the Saviour. Look at the title of the Psalm: "To bring to remembrance." That is just what it has done with me; perhaps it is doing the same with some of you.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.*

I again remind you that this is a child of God, a man who had enjoyed the light of God's countenance; and yet he was in this sad state. Do not utterly condemn yourselves, do not say that you are not the people of God, because you are troubled in heart; but if you really are not God's people as yet, but only seekers after him, do not wonder if sin greatly grieves and vexes you.

7—9. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee;*

The first beam of comfort comes in here. "Lord, I am almost at death's door, yet thou knowest my desire; I do not love sin, I wish to be a true believer, I desire to be holy. Lord, all my desire is before thee. Thou canst read it as if it were written in a book. I need not speak, for I should only spoil my case with my words; but all my desire is before thee."

9. *And my groaning is not hid from thee.*

"I can hide my groaning in a measure from my fellow-creatures; I try to suppress my moans when anybody is near; but my groaning is not hid from thee." Thank God, there is not a tear in any eye but God sees it, nor a groan in any heart but God hears it! Make much of this truth, and find sweet consolation in it.

10. *My heart panteth,*

That is the best sort of prayer in all the world, when there are no words, but in silence there is a panting and longing after God. We cannot explain what this panting is; but if you have ever seen a hunted stag panting for breath, you have some idea what David meant when he said, "My heart panteth."

10. *My strength faileth me:*

That is good prayer, too. "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I cannot pray, I do pray. When my strength fails me, then God's strength comes in to help me.

10, 11. *As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.*

If you have ever had much trouble, you will find that your friends are rather scarce at such times. Friends are very much like swallows; they twitter about us in the summer, and they build their nests under our eaves; but where are they in the winter? Ah! where are they? You may ask the question, but who can answer it? Sorrow is not a thing which attracts company; men naturally hide themselves from grieving companions. So David says, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off."

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*

It is a fine thing, when you are slandered, not to hear it; and it is a better thing never to reply to it. I have always tried to possess one deaf ear and one blind eye; and I believe that the deaf ear is the better ear, and the blind eye by far the more useful of the two. Do not remember the injury that is done to you; try to forget it, and pass it over. Do not go about the world determined to grasp every red-hot iron that any fool holds out before you. Let it alone. It will be for your own good and for God's glory to be very patient under the slander of the wicked.

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.*

So the psalmist, by his example, encourages you to take your troubles to God, and not to handle them yourselves. Spread them before him, and trust in him to deliver you in his own time and way.

16—21. *For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.*

The persecuted psalmist resorts to his God; let us do the same when we also are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

22. *Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.*

David's case is urgent, and his plea is earnest. If we are in a like case, let us also cry, "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation."