

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE UNIVERSE.

A Sermon

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“That thou givest them they gather.”—Psalm civ. 28.

This sentence describes the commissariat of creation. The problem is the feeding of the “creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts,” which swarm the sea, the armies of birds which fill the air, and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land; and in this sentence we have the problem solved, “That thou givest them they gather.” The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the Worker is infinite; if he were not at the head of it, the task would never be accomplished. Blessed be God for the great THOU of the text. It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world; leviathan in the ocean, and the sparrow on the bough, may be alike glad of this, and we, the children of the great Father, much more.

The notion of modern philosophers appears to be that the world is like a clock which an omnipotent phantom has set agoing, and left to run on, each wheel acting upon its fellow by rigid law: or, as a brother remarked to me, they think the Lord has wound up the universe like a watch, and put it under his pillow, and gone to sleep. What think you, brethren, do you find pleasure in a world bereaved of its God? To me, such philosophy is dreary, for my soul pines for an infinite love which will give itself to me, and receive my love in return. I am orphaned, indeed, if my Maker will not pity me as his child, and hear my prayers, compassionate my tears, and succour and comfort me. Babes want a mother's heart as much as her hands. Would you wish to be a child brought up by machinery, washed by a mill-wheel, rocked by a pendulum, fed from a pipe, dressed by a steel hand, and, in fine, committed to the care of a wonderful engine which could do everything except

love you? You would miss the eyes which weep with you, and smile upon you, the lips which kiss you and speak lovingly to you, and the dear countenance which laughs as you are fondled and pressed to a warm bosom. No, I can neither accept a steam-engine instead of my mother, nor a set of laws in exchange for my God. There is a God who careth for all his creatures, and maketh the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man. There is a Father to whom we speak, and who hears us; one who waters the hills from his chambers, and satisfies the earth with the fruit of his works, to whom we may come boldly in every time of need. Because Jehovah liveth, the creatures are fed; he gives them their daily food, they gather it, and so the work is done.

The general principle of the text is, God gives to his creatures, and his creatures gather. That general principle we shall apply to our own case as men and women, for it is as true of us as it is of the fish of the sea, and the cattle on the hills. "That thou givest them they gather."

I. Our first point is this, WE HAVE ONLY TO GATHER, FOR GOD GIVES.

In temporal things, God gives us day by day our daily bread, and our business is simply to gather it. In the wilderness, the manna fell outside the camp of Israel; they had not to make the manna, but to go out in the morning, and gather it before the sun was hot. Providence has guaranteed to the child of God his necessary food: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Our part in the business is to go forth unto our labour, and gather it. True, in some cases, needful food is not gathered without excessive labour, but this is occasioned by the injustice of man, and not by the arrangements of God; and when true religion shall have fully operated upon all classes of mankind, none shall need to toil like slaves. They shall only need to perform such an amount of labour as shall be healthful and enduring. When no man oppresses his fellow, the work of gathering what God gives will be no hardship, but a wholesome exercise. The sweat of labour will then be a blessed medicine.

In this light let us view our worldly business. We are to go forth unto our work and our labour until the evening, and to expect that bounteous providence will thus enable us to gather what the Lord himself bestows; and if by this means he gives us food and raiment, we are to be therewith content. If our faith can see the hand of God in it all, it will be sweet to pick up the manna from the ground, and eat thereof with gratitude, because it tastes of the place from whence it came.

As to *spirituals*, the principle is true, most emphatically. We have, in the matter of grace, only to gather what God gives. The natural man thinks that he has to earn divine favour, that he has to purchase the blessings of heaven, but he is in grave error; the soul has only to receive that which Jesus freely gives. Mercy is a gift, salvation is a gift, all covenant blessings are gifts; we need not bring a price in our hands, but come empty-handed, and gather what is laid before us, even as the birds gather their food, and the

cattle on the hills feed on the herbage which freely grows for them. This is one of the first principles of the gospel. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;" and it is for us by faith to take our omer, and fill it with the angels' food which has fallen all around us, take it into our tent, and there feast, even to the full. 'Tis God's part to give, 'tis ours to gather. Faith's sphere is that of the fleece which absorbs the dew, or the pool which is filled with the rain. Believer, this is the rule in all spiritual things; you are to be a diligent gatherer, and to strive after high spiritual attainments, but still remember that your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask him. These superior blessings are his gifts, and the surest way of obtaining them is to come to him for them, and receive them by faith. You have not to pluck covenant blessings out of a closed hand, you have only to take from the Lord's open palm what he delights to bestow. For you to be straitened and poor gives no pleasure to him; rather will it delight him to fill you with his favour, and to enrich you with all the blessings of his grace.

If the calm quiet spirit of this thought could enter our minds, how happy we should be! We should then sit down at Jesu's feet with Mary, and leave Martha to fret alone. To-morrow morning, before many of our eyes are open, the sun will be rising, and, as soon as his first beams salute the earth, the birds of every wing will awaken, and, seeing the light, they will begin to sing. But where is your breakfast, little bird? Where is the food for to-day for the nest full of little ones? The birds do not know, neither are they anxious, but they gather the first seed, or crumb, or worm which they find, and continuing to do so all day long, they are satisfied. Yes, and when summer is gone, and the long warm days are over, and cold winter sets in, the birds sit and sing on the bare boughs, though frost is on the ground, for they expect that God will give, and all they have to do is to gather. We may learn much from little birds,—yes, even from little birds in cages; for if those who keep them should forget to give them seed and water, they must die, must they not? And yet they sing. They have no great store, perhaps not enough to last them another day; but it does not fret them, neither do they cease their music, and I believe Luther well translated their song when he said that it meant this,—

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow!
God provideth for the morrow."

II. Secondly, it is certain that WE CAN ONLY GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES. However eager we may be, there is the end of the matter. The most diligent bird shall not be able to gather more than the Lord has given it; neither shall the most avaricious and covetous man. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." What God gives you, you will be able to gather; but if you set about to

heap up what your avarice lusts after, no blessing will attend it. What a difference is often seen in two men placed in the same position in life, with the same work to do, and very much the same possessions! You see one of them working cheerfully, happy as a king, sweetening his bread with content and joy in the Lord; while the other murmurs and repines, envying those who are richer, and filled with hard thoughts of God. What makes the one happy and the other wretched? Truly, only that the one has the grace of God to give him contentment, and so is full; and the other has a brutish hunger and greed, and so is left to be his own tormentor. As it is with the poor, so is it with the rich, the heart has more to do with making us happy than our possessions have. He whose soul is full of God, and faith, and contentment, is a truly rich man. The reflection that we can, after all, gather no more than God gives, should make us restful and contented. It teaches us our dependence upon God, and tends to lessen our self-confidence, to moderate our desires, and to abate our cares.

Recollect, dear Christian friends, that *the same remark holds good with regard to spirituals as well as temporals*. You can only gather what the Lord grants you. Before preaching, I was trying to find food for you all, and I began to pray for it, because I remembered that I could only gather for you what the Lord my God gave me. If I bring more than that, it will only be chaff of my own, and not good winnowed corn from his garner. I often need to think of this, for I have to feed a great multitude with spiritual meat almost every day in the week. Where is the poor minister to get the supply from if the Lord does not bring it to him? He waits, therefore, upon his God with humble faith and prayer, expecting that fit matter will be suggested. You also, dear friends, can only obtain, when hearing the Word, what the Holy Spirit gives you. You may hear a thousand sermons, but you will gather nothing that will really quicken or feed your souls unless the Lord gives it to you. Unless the Spirit of the Lord puts fulness into the Word, all the hearing in the world will be nothing worth. The Holy Ghost must take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to the inner man, or you will be surfeited with mere words, or puffed up with human opinions, and nothing more. "That thou givest them they gather," and no more.

So is it when you go out to work for the Lord Jesus Christ among the ungodly. You will win as many souls as God gives you, but no one will be converted by your own power. When we have reason to believe that the Lord has much people in a city, it gives us much comfort in going there. I always do my best for my congregations, because I feel that they are always picked persons, sent to me by my Master: if there are few, they are more than I can edify if he does not help me; and if there be many, so much the more help will my Lord afford me. I can only gather what the Lord gives. We may plant, and we may water too, but God must give the increase. We shall not be a sweet savour unto God, nor a savour of life unto life to any, unless the almighty Spirit of the blessed God shall come forth and work with us.

Should not this lead us to much prayer? No dependence should be placed upon man, or upon the outward form of worship, for the most successful preacher cannot by his own power quicken the dead sinner, or regenerate a depraved soul. The Holy Spirit must be with us, or we prophesy in vain. The most laborious reaper in the Lord's harvest cannot gather more sheaves than his Master gives him. Pray for him, then, that he may not miss his reward; pray for him that he may be strong for labour, that his sickle may be sharp, his arm vigorous, and his harvest plenteous, that he may bring in a glorious load of sheaves to the garner. As for yourselves, when engaged in any service for God, take heed that you rest not in yourselves, for you can receive nothing unless it be given you from above. Your words will be no better than silence, your thoughts no more than day-dreams, and your efforts wasted strength, unless the Lord shall go before you. "Without me ye can do nothing" is a truth you must never forget.

III. Observe, thirdly, that WE MUST GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES, or else we shall get no good by his bountiful giving.

God feeds the creeping things innumerable, but each creature collects the provender for itself. The huge leviathan receives his vast provision, but he must go ploughing through the boundless meadows, and gather up the myriads of minute objects which supply his need. The fish must leap up to catch the fly, the swallow must hawk for its food, the young lions must hunt their prey. "What thou givest them they gather." God has not prepared, in his whole universe, a single corner for an idle being. In no society does the sluggard succeed, and it is not desirable that he should. If a man will not work, he ought to die, for he is of no use alive; he is in everybody's way, and like a fruitless tree he cumpers the ground. God gives, and if a man will not gather, he deserves to starve.

It is so in business; everybody knows that we must be diligent there, for "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." The Book of Proverbs deals very hard blows against sluggards, and Christian ministers do well frequently to denounce the great sin of idleness, which is the mother of a huge family of sins. Idleness is a most contemptible vice; it covers a man with rags, fills him with disease, and makes him a ready servant of the devil. It is a shameful thing that God, "who worketh hitherto," and made us on purpose that we should work, should see us wasting time and strength, and leaving good work unaccomplished. God will not feed you, idle man; his own verdict is, "if he will not work, neither let him eat." If you loaf about, and say, "The Lord will provide," he will probably "provide" you a place in the workhouse, if not in the county jail. If the manna falls near him, and the lazy man will not take the trouble to gather it, his omer will not be filled by miracle, neither will an angel be sent to carry bread and meat to his table. Up, thou sluggard, and gather what the Lord has strewn.

The law of nature and providence holds good in spiritual things. "That thou givest them they gather." There is a spirit abroad in the world—not so powerful now, thank God, as it used to be,—which talks a great deal about grace and predestination, and therein

I rejoice to hear what it has to say; but its inference from those truths is that men are to sit still, to be passive in salvation, and to look upon themselves as so many logs, as if they had no will in the matter, and were never to be called to an account concerning the gospel which they hear. Now, this kind of doctrine virtually teaches that what God gives drops into our mouths, and we need not gather it at all; the very reverse of the Saviour's exhortation to labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. Sovereign grace will not take us to heaven by the hair of our heads, or save us in our sleep, whether we will or no. Such teaching would have been repudiated by the apostles, for it acts like chloroform upon the conscience, and plunges the soul into a deadly lethargy. The fact is, brethren, there is a predestination, and the doctrines of election and effectual grace are true, nor may we deny them; but yet the Lord deals with men as responsible beings, and bids them "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Such exhortations are evidently intended for free agents, and indicate that our salvation requires energetic action. It would not appear from Scripture that we are to lie dormant, and be merely acted upon, for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Of men as well as of birds it is true, "what thou givest them *they gather*." God gives you faith, but *you* must believe. God gives you repentance, but *you* must repent. These graces are the work of God, but they are also the acts of man. How often shall we need to remind these brethren that the Holy Ghost does not believe for us? How can he? Is faith to be exercised by proxy? That cannot be. Neither does the Holy Ghost repent for us; it is absurd to entertain such a notion. We must ourselves personally believe and repent. If any man does not repent as his own act and deed, his repentance and faith are not such as are spoken of in Scripture, or required by the gospel. Brethren, we should pray, repent, and believe, as much as if all these were wholly our own, but we are bound to give God all the glory of them, because it is only by his grace that we either can or will perform them. Men must hear the Word, for "faith cometh by hearing;" they must believe the Word, for "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and they must repent of sin, for if sin be not forsaken, pardon is not given. They must fly to the city of refuge, or the avenger of blood will destroy them. They must escape for their lives to the mountain, or the fire from God will overwhelm them in the city of destruction. "That thou givest them *they gather*." We *must* gather, or we shall not have.

Brethren in Christ, we must not expect spiritual gifts without gathering them. For instance, our souls need food, but we may not expect the Lord to feast us unless we use the means, hear or read his Word, attend to private devotion, and the like. These are channels of grace to us, and woe be to us if we neglect them. If you saw your friend so emaciated that you could count his bones, and so weak that he could scarcely stand, you would enquire what had reduced him so much, for he used to be a strong hearty man. You say to him, "My dear friend, what can be the matter with you?"

You expect him to tell you of some mysterious disease; but no, his tale is far more simple; he confesses that he does not eat, that he has given up having regular meals, and very seldom takes an ounce of nourishment. You quite understand his feebleness and decline, he is injuring his constitution by denying it nutriment. Now, when a Christian man complains that he is full of doubts and fears, and has no joy in the Lord as he used to have, and no enjoyment in prayer or labour for Jesus; if you find out that he neglects all week-night services, never goes to the prayer-meeting, reads anything rather than his Bible, and has no time for meditation, you need not enquire further into his spiritual malady. The man does not gather what God provides. He lets the manna lie outside the camp, and allows the water from the rock to flow untasted, and he must not be astonished that his soul is not in a right condition. Christians will find that, if they neglect the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, and if they forget to wait upon the Lord, and so renew their strength, they will fall into a miserable, weak, low condition, and their souls will be full of doubts, cares, and anxieties, such as they never would have known if they had walked nearer to God, and maintained intimate communion with the Saviour.

As it is with ourselves, *so is it with us in reference to others.* God will give us souls if we pray for them, but we must seek after them. When the Lord calls a man to speak in his name, he intends to give him some success, but he must be on the watch to gather it. Some ministers have preached the gospel long, but have never seen much fruit, because they never tried to gather it; they have had no meetings for enquirers, nor encouraged the young converts to come to them for help. What God has given them they have not gathered. Many professors are always wishing that the church would increase, they would like to see an aggressive work carried on against the world; why do they not set about it? Why stand they gazing up into heaven? Do they expect to see souls converted without means? Dear brethren, it will not do for us to get silly notions into our heads; up to this day, God has been pleased to use instrumentality, and until the second advent he will continue to do so. When the Lord descends from heaven, it will be time enough for us to talk of what he will then do; but till he comes, let us continue to gather the souls he gives us. We are not in such great need of conferences about how to win souls as of men who will do it. I vote for less talk and more work. We cannot have too much prayer, but we certainly need more effort. The Lord said to Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they *go forward!*" We cry, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!" and the Lord replies, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion!" God is awake enough, the arousing is needed by us. We have been praying for his Spirit, and rightly enough; but the Spirit of God is never backward, we are straitened in ourselves. He would use us if we were vessels fit for his use. Oh, that we would yield ourselves fully to the Spirit of God, to be borne which way he wills, even as the clouds are driven by the wind; then he

would draw, and we should run; he would give, and we should gather.

IV. The fourth turn of the text gives us the sweet thought that WE MAY GATHER WHAT HE GIVES. We have divine permission to enjoy freely what the Lord bestows.

Poor sinner, whatever the Lord has given in his gospel to sinners, you may freely gather. When the manna fell in the wilderness, no guards were appointed to keep off the people. No enquiry was made as to the character or experience of those who came to gather it; there it was, and no one was denied. Over the heads of the people might have sounded the words, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the manna freely." Tests and qualifications there were none, and yet the special design was the feeding of Israel. No discriminating divine cried out, "You must not come unless you feel a law-work within, and are sensible sinners." Not a word of the sort was whispered; and the Lord has appointed no one to keep sinners away from the water of life, but he has chosen many to bid poor souls draw near and drink, and the Holy Ghost himself puts forth his power to draw men to it. Jesus says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" and I, for one, have no commission to discourage any, nor will I. What he gives you, you may gather. The little birds ask no questions as to whether they may enjoy the seeds or the worms; they see the food, and take it boldly; so, sinners, it is not for you to raise difficulties about the mercy of God. Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and that *whosoever* is a wide word. Thou need'st not say, "I do not know whether I am elected." Neither can I tell you, nor can any other man. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and none of us know anything about it, except so far as his Spirit teaches us that we ourselves are his. Your thoughts should run in another direction: Christ Jesus came to save sinners, are you a sinner? "Whosoever will, let him come." Are you willing? Then come along with you, and quibble no longer.

God does not guard his great garden of grace as men protect their little patches of ground, wherein they hang up old garments or dead crows to keep the birds away. The Lord giveth freely, and upbraideth not. Certain preachers hang up the dead black crow of their own morbid experience to scare away poor sinners from coming to simple faith in Jesus, but the Lord has no scarecrows in his garden. Do but come, thou blackest of sinners, and he will receive thee. The strangest bird, with speckled wing, may freely gather what mercy gives. Whatever is preached in the gospel as the object of faith, everyone that believes may have; whatever is promised to repentance, everyone that repents may have; and whatever is promised to coming to Christ, everyone that comes to Christ shall have. "That thou givest them they gather," for God gives it to be gathered. He gave the manna on purpose for it to be eaten; he would not have sent bread from heaven if men had not wanted it, and if he had not meant to feed them. Grace must have been meant for sinners; it will suit no other persons. If I have a hard heart, the Spirit of God can soften it; why should he

not do so? Here is a foul sinner, and yonder is a fountain filled with blood which cleanses completely; why should he not wash? What was Christ meant for but to be a Saviour? And if he be a Saviour, why should he not save *me*? Surely, when I am thirsty, and I see the water springing up before me, I may as well drink. Sinner, there is a spring open here by the grace of our Lord Jesus, and you have come this way, and therefore I suggest to you, and I pray the Spirit of God also to suggest it to you, that between the fountain and the thirsty soul there ought to be a connection at once begun. God invites you, your need constrains you, may his Spirit draw you; for even now what he has given you may gather!

V. The last thought is, GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE US SOMETHING TO GATHER.

It is written, "The Lord will provide." The other day, as I walked on a common, I picked up a dead sparrow; going a little further, I found another; and my friend said to me, "I have found another," and he remarked, "It must have been a bad season; these birds must have been starved." "No, no," I said, "you are not going to pick up dead sparrows killed by the weather. That cottager, over the hedge, has some rows of young peas, and he keeps a gun." Men kill the birds, God does not starve them.

Brother, *if you are under the guardian care of God you shall not want.* If you are your own shepherd, you will probably stray into very lean pastures one of these days; but if the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want; he will make you to lie down in green pastures. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger," for they try to take care of themselves; "but they that seek the Lord," although they are often very simple-minded people, and easily imposed upon, "shall not want any good thing," for God will take care of them. I have often noticed how wonderfully poor widows manage to live and struggle through with large families. When they were dependent upon their husbands, they were often badly off; and when their husbands died, it seemed as if they must starve; but if they are Christian women, they look to God, and God becomes their Husband, and he is a far better husband than the man they have lost. When God takes the children in hand, and becomes their Father, they cannot lack; help is raised up in unexpected quarters, and they are provided for, they can scarcely tell how. If, in providence, we have learned to live by faith in God, we may be sure that he will not fail us. "The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish."

Thus is it also in spiritual things. If you are willing to gather, God will always give. Go to the Bible, and say, "Lord, give me a promise," and you will find one suitable to your case. Go and hear his servants whom he has sent; go with hearts ready to receive the Word, and you will not return empty. The Lord will make us speak to your case as much as if we knew all about you. Bring your largest vessel with you, and the Lord will fill it to the brim. Never does a believer open his mouth wide but the Lord fills it. Be you ready to gather, and you may be right well assured that the divine fulness will never cease to supply your need.

Thus, from a very simple text, we have had our lesson; go home, and feed upon what you have gathered, and take care to bless the name of the Lord.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XXXIV.

The title of this Psalm is, "A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech (or, Achish); who drove him away, and he departed." It relates to a sad scene in David's life when he had to feign madness in order to escape from his enemies; but I notice that, although the fact is recorded, yet David does not dwell upon it in the Psalm. He had acted as a fool or a madman, but he was not fool enough, or mad enough, to glory in his shame. I have heard some men, whose past lives have been very disgraceful, who, after their professed conversion, have seemed to make a boast of their sin. David does not do that, nor will any other right-minded person. Let us always be ashamed of our sin, even while we magnify the grace of God which has saved us from it. Though we may feel that it is needful to mention it in order to encourage others to hope in the mercy of God, yet we must take care that we never even seem to dwell upon it with any kind of gusto. Thus the Psalm begins:—

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times :*

"Whether the times are dark or light, whether I feel well or ill, whether the Lord deals with me graciously or severely, I will bless him at all times."

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

What a blessed mouthful! If we could but carry out this resolve of David, we should not find so much fault with others as we often do. We shall have little or no opportunity for grumbling and murmuring if praise to Jehovah shall continually be in our mouth.

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD :*

All men are more or less given to boasting, but it seems to be specially characteristic of Englishmen and Americans. Well, there is a right way of boasting; if you can truly say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," you may boast away as much as you like.

2. *The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

Any other kind of boasting makes humble people sad; but when we boast in the Lord, the more we boast the more the humble rejoice.

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

Let each one of us throw his stone upon the cairn to make the heap as high as possible, for every one has some peculiar cause for gratitude and thanksgiving.

4. *I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*

It was a very poor way of seeking the Lord when he had got into the hand of the Philistines, and was planning in his own mind a disgraceful way of escaping from them. It was not that calm quiet calling upon God that one would have liked to see in David. Still, God heard him, and that makes the deliverance all the more wonderful.

5. *They looked unto him,**

"All these people that have come at my call to join me in praising the Lord: 'They looked unto him,'"—

5. *And were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.*

* See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 195, "Looking unto Jesus."

No, not one of them ; if they looked to God, light shone from God upon their faces, and their faces glowed with the holy radiance, so they had no reason to be ashamed.

6, 7. *This poor man cried,* and the LORD heard him, and saved him, out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

David's deliverance had been so special that he could not help feeling that some special deliverer had been employed on his behalf ; "the angel of the Lord" had been sent to his help. Then David, why did you act like a madman? Ah! that was through his want of faith ; yet even want of faith must not make us rob God of his glory. What though we were unbelieving, he was faithful ; therefore let us give him his due meed of praise. Let us try to blot out the remembrance of our own weakness with our tears, but let us not erase the memory of God's lovingkindness to us.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

You may not only believe that God is good, but it may become a matter of experience with you : "O taste and see that the Lord is good." You cannot see the goodness of God to perfection without tasting it, so use the sense of taste as well as that of sight. Some people want first to see, and then to taste, but David says, "Taste and see."

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, ye his saints : for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack,—*

They are strong, cunning, ravenous, yet they "do lack,"—

10. *And suffer hunger :*

They try to take care of themselves, and therefore they get badly taken care of.

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.†*

When God takes care of us, we are well taken care of, though we are not lions ; but sheep ; for we have a Shepherd, and the lions have not, so we "shall not want any good thing."

11. *Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

I should not wonder but that, when David played the madman, and scabbled on the doors of the gate, the children in the streets gathered round him, and mocked him. Wherever we have done harm to any, let us try to do them good. So did David ; he sought to gather the children about his knees, and to talk to them : "Come, ye children." He does not begin by saying, "Stand off, ye children." There would be no teaching them in that way ; you must seek to draw them to yourselves if you would draw them to your Lord. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Though David had been anointed king, he remained a teacher of children ; and the highest honour we can have is, for Christ's sake, to teach the little ones. Children love bright, happy teaching ; they naturally desire life and happiness ; so David begins :—

12, 13. *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good ? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

Children's tongues are very active, and they need to be reminded that their tongues must be sanctified, or they will say what is evil. David had both spoken and acted with guile at the court of Achish, so he particularly

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,193, "A Poor Man's Cry, and What Came of it."

† See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 65, "Lions Lacking, but the Children Satisfied."

dwelt upon that matter. "Depart from evil,"—run away from it; not merely do not do it, but get away from it: "Depart from evil, and do good."

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous,*

He does not merely give a glance at them now and then, but his eyes rest on them, he is always watching them.

15. *And his ears are open unto their cry.*

The translators put in the words "are open," but they were not needed.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil,—*

You know what we mean when we say, "I set my face against it." So God sets his face against the wicked. Note how near both the righteous and the wicked are to an observing God. In the first case, his eyes are upon the righteous; in the second, his face "is against them that do evil,"—

16. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*

He will stamp them out as men do with fire. He will not even let them be remembered; he will take means to ensure that their unholy example shall die with them.

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

That is something to teach the children,—teach them from your own experience, that God does hear and answer prayer; teach them to pray to God always, and to believe that prayer has real and beneficial results: "The Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

18. *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

We often hear of people who die of a broken heart; but here we read about people who live with a broken heart; and it is the best way of living too, with a heart that is broken for sin, and broken from sin, a heart that in every portion of it feels the power of God.

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous:—*

Do not tell the children that the good are always happy, and that the good escape trial, because you will deceive them if you do. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous,"—the happiness, the glory, the heaven of the righteous is not here, but hereafter. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous:—"

19. *But—*

Blessed "but"—

19. *The LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

Not only out of some of them, but "out of them all." The righteous do not get out of them by their own power, but the Lord delivereth them; they have a Divine Helper.

20. *He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.*

The righteous may have skin wounds, and flesh wounds, but they shall not suffer any real hurt. God will not let his people be so injured as to be incapable of holiness. There shall be no bone-breaking in Christ's mystical body, even as not one of the bones of Christ was broken.

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked:*

Sin itself shall slaughter them.

21, 22. *And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*