



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Psalm 27:7-14

“Inquiring in His Temple”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] We're turning again to Psalm 27 and reading the entire the psalm. Last week in the first of the two messages on this psalm, I made reference to the fact that many of our contemporary scholars regard this psalm as a composite psalm made up of two sections from things that perhaps David wrote and now found in our texts in one psalm. And there are reasons for thinking that because the first six verses have a character that is quite different from the remainder of the psalm.

On the other hand, there are some things, both from the standpoint of the language and the content of the psalm, that make it more likely that this is a single psalm. In fact, the chief reason why it seems to me that we do have one psalm rather than a composite is it's hard to see how any thinking person would take these two parts which are so different in reading and put them in one psalm. And the fact that they are lends credence, as far as I'm concerned, to the fact that it was a psalm of David, and the fourteen verses belong together. But we're going to read the entire psalm again. And you may note the different character of the opening verses from the last eight.

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes,

came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. (That incidentally is almost certainly proverbial and hypothetical and does not really represent an experience as we would understand the words of David.) Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD (Incidentally, this verse is one of the statements that David makes that indicates a unity that exists in this psalm, because in one sense, this is the lesson of the thirteen verses that precede.) Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and we bow now in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours today to gather in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving, to read the word of God and to hear the ministry of the word of God. We thank Thee for the freedoms that we have to do this in our country. And we express to Thee gratitude for the divine providence that has brought us to this place and under which we live and seek to serve Thee. We thank Thee for the country of which we are a part. For our president, give him wisdom and guidance. For others in government, we pray for them as well. And Father, as we reflect upon our experiences in the light of the experiences of the great king of Israel, David, we thank Thee for the help that Thou hast given us in years past. We thank Thee that we can speak in a similar way, though no doubt, in smaller measure. Thou hast been our help as well.

And we thank Thee for the invitation given to us to seek Thy face. Oh God, enable us truly to seek Thy face and to grow in the knowledge of Thee through our Lord Jesus Christ who is the express image of the eternal God and has brought to our understanding the fullness of the beauty of the face of our God. We thank Thee for Thee, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who lives within our hearts to magnify him who died for sinners. We pray, Lord, for the sick particularly who have requested our prayers. We ask that Thou wilt minister to them, that Thou would give healing in accordance with Thy will. Supply the necessities that exist.

And above all, Lord, lead us all, including those who are ill and sick and bereaved, into a deeper knowledge of our great God in heaven. We pray for our church, Believers Chapel, for its leadership. Give direction to us with regard to the future. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ as well today. May this be a significant day in our earthly history. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] One well-known author of Christian works has said, "The Christian life is no child's play. All who have gone on pilgrimage to the Celestial City have found a

rough road, sloughs of despond and hills of difficulty, giants to fight and tempters to shun." Those words obviously rely upon John Bunyan and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but they express very much the fact of the Christian life.

Friedrich Boetellschlenger was a well-known 19th Lutheran minister. He was led into the ministry by the influence of the pietists and had a number of children. He taught the word of God to children. And through the teaching of the word of God to children, the Bible came alive for him, and the experience of the Christian life began as a result of that. Mr. Boetellschlenger was living at the time of one of the great epidemics of diphtheria in Germany in 1869. He lost four of his children within a few months to that epidemic. He said after the experience, "Now I know for the first time how hard God can be." And what he meant by that was the fact that we as believers are often called upon to go through the deepest and hardest kinds of crises. Many of you in this audience have already experienced some of those things.

Bunyan, of course, wrote his great *Pilgrim's Progress* as an allegory. But what he wrote about in allegorical ways are things that King David knew in reality. David was hunted in the hills. He was hunted in the valleys. He was hunted in the caves. He was envied by his friends. He was envied by his family. He was betrayed by his trusted counselors. He was even betrayed by the members of his own family. What David therefore tells us about survival is something that all of us who claim to be Christians should ponder.

This psalm, I mentioned, is an expression of David's experience. It's in two parts. The one is very calm; the other is very tempestuous. He moves from praise and commitment to earnest entreaty, and yet underneath, there is a significant sense of confidence in the Lord God. One thing you can say about King David and it is this that in his life he was not, to use a modern phrase, vegetating in monotonous dullness. Everything in David's life was very significant, very interesting. There were ups and there were downs. He writes of his experiences in this great psalm.

Now we're going to look at this in three ways. We'll look at the worshiper's cries for God's power and presence in verse 7 through verse 10. Then we'll look at the pilgrim's cry for guidance and deliverance, for he speaks not only as a worshiper but as a pilgrim, in verses 11 and 12. And then the last two verses we'll call confidence and counsel, in which David gives us some counsel as well as counsel for anyone who should read this great psalm.

So we turn now to verse 7 through verse 10 and the worshiper's cries for God's power and presence. Now if you notice the words that just precede in verse 5 and verse 6, he speaks of a triumph. For example, in verse 6 he states, "And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD." But the victory is still future, and so troubles and trials are still abounding.

The confident cry for mercy is expressed in verses 7 and 8. "Hear me, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy upon me." Now this is a response to an invitation because in the very next verse he says, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face." And so David is doing just that: He is seeking the Lord's face, and he is asking for mercy upon him.

Now in response to the invitation, you can tell immediately that he grounds his petition not in his own merit but in God's goodness. Lord, have mercy upon me. In other words, it's not because of anything that exists in me that I'm asking for mercy. It's because of what exists in you, the goodness that you have expressed in your invitation, that I should seek your face. But then he says in the 8th verse, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

I think it's very interesting as you look at these two verses, but particularly verse 8. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." John Calvin says in some comments on this that this is a dialogue between the believing heart and the Lord God. He likens the divine invitation, "Seek ye my face" to

the key wherewith opens the door for prayer. In other words, it is "Seek ye my face" that is the key that enables David to pray as he prays. Without this prelude, Mr. Calvin says, no one shall lead the chorus of prayer. The reply of the heart, "Thy face, LORD, will I seek," Calvin likens to the echo that is sleeping in silence till the voice calls it forth.

Well now you can tell from this, "Seek ye my face," "Thy face, LORD, will I seek," that the one who begins this little dialogue is the Lord God himself. In other words, it's not David that began it. It's the Lord that began it. The first move come from God. And this fact determines everything. In fact, this fact determines our whole life with the Lord God. It's the fact that he has spoken to us first that calls forth everything that comes to the glory of God from our life. But he not only calls it forth, but we learn from Scripture that he produces it by his own work in our hearts. So, what a confident cry for mercy, "Lord, have mercy also upon me, and answer me" because he senses that it is God who has called upon him to ask for the things that are the concerns of his heart.

He continues with the cry for his presence and its confidence. And this is further response to the invitation of verse 8.

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my mother and my father forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."

Let's think just for a moment about this expression, "Thou hast been my help." The God of his salvation has already proved himself to David when he makes this request. He doesn't say, O Lord, I hope you will be my help. But looking back over his experience, he says, "O God, thou hast been my help." The past encourages the future. The past supports the future. The fact that he has ministered to us in the past, the fact

that he has brought us to himself in the past is the confidence that we have for everything in the future.

Man's usual response is not that way. If we find someone who has helped us and we go to that person, very frequently among men, the person will rather take the attitude: You came to me and I helped you last time, but why don't you go to someone else this time. That's very common with us. Or if we are the ones who are giving help, someone comes to us and says to us, You've helped me. I'd like for you to help me again. We tend, because of our nature, to want to say: Why don't you go to brother or sister So-and-so. Last time it was a little bit of a sacrifice for me to do for you what I did, and I'm not sure that I really would like to do it again.

But God is just the opposite. When you go to him and receive help from him, that's encouragement and that's what he would like to do. He would like to do it again. He would like to continue to give help because ultimately, of course, he receives the glory and justly does he receive the glory. He does not do it because he's selfish. You must remember that God is the eternal infinite God. And consequently, it is only right and proper that he have the glory. It would be wrong for anyone else to have the glory. That's his nature. That's right. That's proper. And so consequently, do not think of God's desire that we glorify him as being a selfish desire. It's anything but that. It's the desire for that which is right, for that which is true, that which is proper.

Now, if you look at David's life, I think that you can see some of the reasons why David speaks as he does. "Have mercy upon me." "Thy face, Lord, I will seek." "Thou hast been my help." "Don't leave me, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation."

Upon what may David have been meditating when he said, "Thou hast been my help."? Well, let's go back to David's life. David was the last of eight sons, I believe. At least he had seven older sibs. And if you know anything about life then, the oldest son was the one who normally received the greatest blessing. He had the blessing of the

inheritance that was greater than the others. And furthermore, it was just simply the life of the times to honor the oldest son.

I've always liked that. I'm an oldest son in my family. My brother has not been happy about that, I don't suppose, though he's never expressed it, but at least it's good to be the oldest son.

Now, when time came for someone to take care of the sheep, it's not Eliab, or some of the older sons who are sent out to take care of the sheep. It's David. And so, as a youth, he finds his way out to the hills of Judea, and there he is with the sheep. But this was all within the purpose of God as we know. He took his harp, evidently, with him. And there he played his songs and he wrote a number of his hymns, no doubt, and psalms. And furthermore, he learned things about the Lord God. It's been suggested that he wrote his great 19th Psalm about the creation during his shepherd work, and incidentally, about the word of God as well.

So, there on the hills and in the valley with the sheep around him, God used that to teach him the things that he should know when he was a shepherd. And he can, no doubt, tell of the many ways in which God helped him. He, as I say, used it as an occasion for growth. But you must remember that as far as he was concerned, he was the young son who was separated from the family.

While he was out there, he had some interesting experiences. He just alludes to them later on when he's ready to face Goliath, but he tells of one incident, for example, when he met a lion. And he overcame the lion with his own power and strength. I must say that from that time on I admired David. Anyone who can, as a shepherd boy, overcome a lion has my admiration. But not only that, he also came across a bear who had just taken one of the lambs from his flock. And he also killed the bear. So, as a young man, he's growing in strength and power, but God also is giving him experiences, no doubt, in which he had to appeal to the Lord God for help.

Then when Samuel was told Saul is to be deposed from power and that the Lord, as he told Samuel, "I have already chosen someone else. Go to the house of Jesse and anoint one of his sons as king over Israel." And Samuel came to Jesse. And if you'll remember, Jesse was told that one of his sons was to be anointed as king over Israel in King Saul's place. He called for his sons. They all passed before Samuel. And as each passed before him, Samuel said, That's not the one. That's not the one. The Lord's not speaking to me about that particular one. He's not the one.

And the text, the famous text, "The Lord does not look on the outward; he looks upon the heart" is given. And finally Samuel has to say to Jesse, Is there not another son? Oh, yes, there's another son. He's out with the sheep. And David is called in, and of course, Samuel gets the message, This is the one.

You can almost see some of the tenor at least of verse 10, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." He's the son who doesn't amount to a whole lot among the seven other ones, but nevertheless, he's the one upon whom God has put his hand.

Well, as a result, you know that he ultimately is called into Saul's help, because Saul has psychological problems, and there was no living psychologist to take care of him. And so they used David and his harp to minister to him psychologically. So when Saul had one of his difficult times, then David would play on his harp. And as you know, finally, Saul became extremely jealous of David, sought to kill him, and persecuted him, chased him over the mountains, the hills and the caves and the valleys, and God delivered David from the hand of Saul.

And these experiences of which we are reading here are no doubt experiences that include some of those. In fact, one experience that David had comes to mind that must have been a time of temptation because, if you'll remember, David and Abishai are enabled to stealthily come up upon Saul and his soldiers unobserved. And they stand by the body of Saul, and Abishai says, Let me kill him with my sword right now. And David

said, No, don't touch the Lord's anointed. Did he cut off a piece of his garment and leave it there just to let Saul know that he had been there? That was one of the great temptations that David had. And God gave him help and delivered him from what would have been a very serious thing.

But you can see, when David prays "Thou hast been my help" that he is not talking simply as a man might talk in a theological classroom. This is an individual who knows the truth and experience of the things of which he is talking.

The immutability of God, the unchanging nature of his character, my Christian friends, is reason why you and I may expect the same kind of deliverance from the Lord God, when we too have need of help. The same God who ministered to David the King is the God who ministers to us. And so if David can take comfort and help from what he has experienced in the past, you and I can also take comfort from the things that David and others have experienced in the past also.

This is the same immutable God. And consequently, we are able to enter into the experience of David and other saints who have known the truth of these great spiritual principles. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Everyone for whom Christ has died has the promise from the Apostle Paul through the Holy Spirit that everything will be given to them. Nothing withholden. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" So, if he's done the most for us, he will do the rest. And so consequently, he is our help as well.

I love the 10th verse. As a matter of fact, the 10th verse is the reason that I'm speaking to you over these two Sundays, from reading this psalm and pondering it. This is the one that especially ministered to me. I confess, I think as I confessed last week, that a kind of lump came into my throat as I read this text, the 10th verse, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."

There is no reason to believe that David was forsaken. He evidently was overlooked by his parents, but not forsaken. This is proverbial. It's hypothetical. It's designed to teach us that the love of God exceeds all other loves. Every other love is less than the love that God has for his saints.

Listen to the famous text that Isaiah the prophet wrote, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Well, we know the answer to that now, but for a long time you might have said, No, a woman cannot do that. We know that that commonly happens today, unfortunately. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Isaiah answers his question and says, "Yea, they may forget, yet will I (the Lord God) yet will I not forget thee." So, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up."

I have, as you know, in the past few months been thinking again about the way in which God dealt with George Mueller. When I was in the insurance business in Alabama, one of the books that was put in my hand was A. T. Pierson's life of George Mueller called George Mueller of Bristol. I read that when I was in the insurance business, and I must say that it's had a great influence on my life. One of the things that has impressed me, from the Lord I believe from that life of Mueller in the book, is that we have every reason to believe that if we commit our lives to the Lord, he will meet our needs. And that this pertains not simply to me, this pertains to the work that God does as well. Mr. Mueller and his life has been a living illustration of that fact. Any one who will take the shortest amount of time and consider the work that God did through his servant George Mueller in the city of Bristol in England, and what he did in the orphan homes, and the Scriptural Knowledge Institution as well, cannot help but see that there is an infinite God in heaven who meets the needs of his saints.

Mr. Mueller started out small, had only a few hundred orphans in the beginning, but then ultimately, at least two thousand, I believe, were supported and supported by

prayer only. No one knew the needs for that institution except Mr. Mueller and a few of his closest intimates. And incidentally, every one of the people who ministered were not allowed to mention to anyone the needs of the institution. It was something that was done in the presence of God only.

He says that the years 1838 to 1846 were the years that they were especially in need. These were the beginning years when people didn't know about the orphanages. I'm going to read a few statements which will give you some sense of what was done by the Lord through him. This is from his journal:

August the 18th, 1838, "I have not one penny in hand for the orphans. In a day or two again, many pounds will be needed. My eyes are up to the Lord."

Evening, "Before this day is over I have received from a sister five pounds. She had sometimes since put away her trinkets to be sold for the benefit of the orphans. This morning whilst in prayer, it came to her mind, I have this five pounds and I owe no man anything. Therefore, it would be better to give this money at once as it may be some time before I can dispose of the trinkets. She therefore brought it, little knowing that there was not a penny in hand and that I had been able to advance only four pounds fifteen shillings five pence for housekeeping in the boy's orphan house instead of the usual ten pounds, knowing also that within a few days many pounds more will be needed.

August the 20th, "The five pounds which I had received on the 18th have been given for housekeeping so that today I was again penniless."

This goes on day after day after day. And Mr. Mueller made an interesting comment. He said, "During the whole period of the eight years, the children knew nothing of the trial." They didn't know a thing that was going on. They didn't realize that they were penniless. They didn't realize they were dependent upon day by day living. He says during the whole period, the children knew nothing of the trial. In the midst of one of the darkest periods he recorded, and these are his words now, "These dear little

ones know nothing about it because their tables are as well-supplied as when there was eight hundred pounds in the bank. And they have lack of nothing."

And another time he wrote, "The orphans have never lacked anything. Had I a thousand pounds in hand, they would have fared no better than they have, for they have always had good nourishing food, the necessary articles for clothing."

In other words, the periods of trial were so in the sense that there was no excess of funds. God supplied the need by the day, even by the hour. Enough was sent, but no more than enough. He has offered and he has guaranteed he will supply our needs.

I wish I had time just to read all of these little things. I recommend that you read one of those books. Roger Steer's more recent biography of Mr. Mueller is surely an inspirational volume.

One day this one impressed me because Mr. Mueller had told all of the workers that they were never to mention how much money they had to anyone who came to visit. And there is a comment here, "'We have now again to look to the Lord for further supplies,' Mueller said to Brother Teed on the Wednesday afternoon following, having just given him the last of the money they had in hand. That afternoon a lady and gentleman visited the homes in Wilson Street. At the boy's house they met two ladies who were also on a visit. One of whom turned to the matron and said, 'Of course, you cannot carry on these institutions without a good stock of funds.' Turning to the matron, the gentleman then said, 'Have you a good stock?' 'Our funds are deposited in a bank which cannot break.'"

No savings and loan crisis in heaven. Isn't it interesting? No crooks in heaven. No mistakes in heaven. No failures in heaven. "'Our funds are deposited in a bank which cannot break,' the matron replied cleverly avoiding breaking the rule never to reveal the state of funds. Tears came into the eyes of the inquiring lady. So the Lord will take me up."

All of those orphans through all of those years, thirty or forty years, each one of them knew precisely the meaning of this text, "When my father and my mother forsake me (for whatever reason), then the LORD will take me up."

Mr. Spurgeon, in speaking about this text, says that as he looked at his life, he can look back over his life and say that his life is the illustration of the attributes of God. That if you will look at his life, you can see all of the things that make up the triune God: "His justice, his mercy, his righteousness, his love, all of the great attributes that pertain to the being of God find their illustration," he said, "in my life."

And I might say to you, my Christian friend, that the attributes of God find their illustration also in your life. His goodness, his mercy, his lovingkindness, his righteousness, his justice, all of the things that mark him out as being the eternal infinite triune God are the things that are seen in his dealings with you. So, when David prays, "Thou hast been my help," "the LORD will take me up," what an encouragement it is to you and to me to do just that.

But he goes on to speak about the pilgrim's cry for guidance and deliverance in verses 11 and 12. The pilgrim, and we are all Christian pilgrims remember, the pilgrim is in the world amid clattering conflict with every step contested. And David's life again illustrates that every step is contested.

There is a prayer that is made here in verse 11, "Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies" that is a prayer against dangers that each of us face. First of all, choosing our own way, we are unable to do that. We do not have the wisdom to do that. This prayer is necessary because of our moral and spiritual blindness. He talks about this in more than one place. For him guidance was very significant and very important.

If you turn back a page or so and read Psalm 25, verses 5 and 6, he prays a similar prayer. "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Verses 9 and 10, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and

the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."

And so, when David prays as a pilgrim, he's praying, and he's praying in such a way that he may meet the dangers that each of us face choosing our own way, or when God has made his way known to us, refusing to trust his leading because it may appear to lead us into a path of darkness. So, he says, "Teach me thy way, O LORD, lead me in a plain path (That means a path of equity.) plain path, because of mine enemies."

Whenever you get down upon your knees and pray, you should pray prayers like this, Teach me thy way, O Lord.

In the 12th verse, he speaks about deliverance from his enemies, "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

Cunning and violent, David's enemies were. They were individuals who wanted, to put it in the starkest and truest language, they wanted the precious blood. They wanted to destroy the king, even his own son, Absalom. Absalom, the leader of the Absalom party, which had as its political motto: Dump David. Absalom, his own son, leading it.

Now Absalom, typical of political men in our day, what did Absalom do? Well, he sat at the gate. And when individuals came from all over the land and asked for help, he would meet them. And he would say, From what city do you come? Oh, I come from Beersheba. And then he would say, Oh, it's too bad. In Beersheba you haven't been getting the help that you should have. We haven't been doing for you what we should have been doing. The king has been negligent in handling your problems. Now if I were on the throne, then we would help you. And so, in this way, Absalom built up a party. It's not called in Scripture the Absalom party, but that's what it was and their motto was Dump David.

But David, of course, the man of God, is committing his affairs to the Lord God. And when he says, "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me," this is not something general. This is something specific, for all throughout his ministry, he had them. Cunning, violent men, they want the precious blood of David, just as the followers of the evil one wanted the precious blood of David's great antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we read that when he came on the scene and ministered, then we read of those who were the leaders in that day watching him, seeking some way by which they could find fault with him and consequently, 'Dump Jesus' became their political motto, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Gentiles combining in it. So, "False witnesses have risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty."

And finally in the last two verses, a word of confidence and a word of counsel. "I had fainted," he said, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." There's a suppressed clause here, and it's rendered in the King's James Version in this way, and it says essentially the sense. In other words, "If I did not know the goodness of the Lord, then I had suddenly perished" is the idea lying back of it. So confidence in the goodness of God, sure of God's goodness in this life, he looked forward to some merciful interposition.

Whether this was to be in the land of the living as we think of the land of living, that is, the land and the living in which we are at the present moment, or whether this is a reference to the future, it's probably impossible to be absolutely sure of. But in the final analysis, this land is not the land of the living. This land is the land of the dying. And so ultimately, this great promise is a promise that has to do with the glory that is to come, a kind of foresight of it. But David may have had in mind the confidence that he knew that better times would come because he knew the glorious mercy of his great God.

And then finally in verse 14 he says, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

In a sense, this is a summary of the whole psalm. It would be interesting to go back over it and point it out. I'll just point out one thing so you'll get the sense of it. In verse 2 we read, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh," we have no indication of what David did, but we read, "they stumbled and fell." In other words, as he waited on the Lord, "they stumbled and fell."

So to wait on the Lord is to wait for him to deliver us from our trials and problems. Like a beggar who waits for alms, like a learner who waits on his scholarly teacher, like a servant who waits upon his master, like a traveler who follows the guide: all of these things illustrations. Like a child who should listen to his parents and wait upon them. But to me, the greatest illustration of all is Israel itself, brought out of the land of Egypt into the wilderness, and God gave them guidance day by day. There was the pillar of cloud and there was the pillar of fire. Throughout the day the pillar of cloud, throughout the night, the pillar of fire. And whenever the cloud moved, they were to move. When the cloud stayed, they were to stay. An objective guidance from the Lord constantly.

Now look, my Christian friend, you're liable to say, Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if we had a cloud in heaven and cloud of fire at night. Then we would know the will of God. How foolish. Would you rather have a cloud than the personal presence of the Lord God himself? The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit has come within our hearts to give us guidance.

Well, you would say, I can see with the cloud. But wait a moment. The infinite eternal God within my breast giving me guidance, nothing is greater than that. Well, I don't understand exactly. Ah yes, that's our problem. Our problem is that we've not given him a chance, to learn how to respond to him. We haven't been listening. We haven't been responding to his teaching. And so consequently, we're inclined to think we'd rather have something physical. We'd like to have perhaps a notebook by the side of our bed and have it written on during the night. We get up; this is what we are to do

today. Well, if I know you, and if I know me, if it were written there by the side of the bed, that wouldn't necessarily mean that I would obey it. I need more help than that. I need more help than just something written. I need the power of God within my life to deliver me from my moral and spiritual blindness and weakness and rebellion against the Lord God.

The French have a little motto: *aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera*, or help yourself, heaven will help you. That means something like: Those who help themselves, God will help. Or as we say, God helps those who help themselves. That's the precise opposite of what Scripture says.

Scripture says we have a God who helps and we appeal to him. We who acknowledge we cannot help ourselves, turn to him who inevitably and always conqueringly helps us.

Well, the true nature of Christian worship I think, as I think of this psalm, is seeking God's face. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and also to enquire in his temple." It's God's command. It's God's promise. "Seek my face." "Thy face, LORD, will I seek." David giving ready response to God's great promise. And the divine reaction, Scripture tells us, is that he will satisfy the desire of every living thing.

I don't know whether you know this or not. It had escaped my mind that Robinson Crusoe was written by a Presbyterian minister. And you know the story of Robinson Crusoe. I know Mr. Spurgeon said that he loved to read it and continued to read it as long as he lived. And that every time he read it, he enjoyed it. Well, he has a sermon called "Robinson Crusoe's text" and it's Psalm 50 and verse 15. "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

And you know that Robinson Crusoe shipwrecked on an island. No one there. Finally became very ill. He was there without anyone to wait on him, none to even bring

him a drink of water. He's about to die. He'd been accustomed to a life of sin, all the vices of a sailor. And his hard case brought him to think. And finally he opened a Bible that he had with him. And he came upon this text, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." For the first time in his life, he prayed that night. And ever after, there was in him a hope in God which marked the birth of the heavenly life.

Now Mr. Spurgeon has a comment near the end of his message on Robinson Crusoe's text. I'd like to mention it. He said really that what we have here is God and praying man take shares. First, here is your share. "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Secondly, here is God's share, "I will deliver Thee." Again you take a share, for you shall be delivered. And then again, it's the Lord's turn, "Thou shalt glorify me." Here is a compact, a covenant that God enters into with you who pray to him and whom he helps. He says, You shall have the deliverance, but I must have the glory. Here's a delightful partnership. We obtain that which we so greatly need, and all that God getteth is the glory that is due unto his name.

That, it seems to me, is expressive of the life of Christian worship. Who is a pardoning God like Thee, or who has grace so rich and free?

Final word. There's some of you sitting in the audience who could never pray as David did because your life has been a life outside of God. You cannot look back and say, "Thou hast been my help." And if you are the kind of individual who cannot say that and do not want to say it, then of course, the text has no meaning for you and no significance for you.

But on the other hand, if you should happen to be an individual who's a Christian man, it means a great deal to you.

But if also you're an individual who's seeking to know the fullness of the experience that David had, there is encouragement for you, too, because you're here. The fact that you're here is all optimistic. The fact that you're still alive is all optimistic.

God may have a purpose for you. The fact that he has showered you with the blessings that we call common grace, the kind of blessing in which he has given you the sun, the moon, the stars, the food, the clothing, the sustenance that you have is all from the Lord God. And if within your heart, deep down in your heart, there arises a desire to have more, to have the sense of the forgiveness of sins, this text is a text to which you can appeal. And if you can add to that the fact that you know that Christ died for sinners, then of course, you may receive the greatness of the salvation of the Lord God. And may God in his marvelous grace so move you to realize that you have been under the sovereign providential hand of God to this point, and Christ has died for sinners such as you and I are. And come to him. Trust him. Believe in him. And all of the promises of the word of God become ours. May God in his grace touch your heart. May you come to him and believe in him.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the marvelous promises that are found in the word of God. Lord, Thou has truly been our help. For that we give Thee thanks. We pray that all of us who know what it is to have come to Christ may appreciate what we really have. And then Lord, we pray that if there are some in the audience who have not yet come to him, whom to know is life eternal, may they come. May they confess their need, lean upon Christ and his atoning, saving work and enjoy the life that is life indeed. For Jesus' sake. Amen.