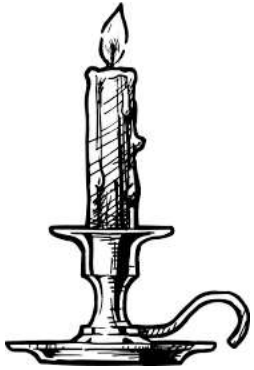


Wednesday, 10th March 2021



THE CANDLESTICK

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name (Ps. 103:1)

Spurgeon began his commentary on this psalm by describing it as the praise of David ‘at its best’, and he reckoned “we should attribute [the psalm] to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because of a keener sense of sin than in his younger days”. Spurgeon’s friend, G. Campbell Morgan, wrote similarly, “It is perhaps the most perfect song of pure praise to be found in the Bible ... Through centuries it has been sung by glad hearts, and today is as fresh and full of beauty as ever”.

In this psalm is David’s appreciation of the greatness of God. He spent his boyhood as a shepherd in the Bethlehem countryside, acutely aware of God’s work in His beautiful creation. During the long nights of being out on the hillside, he often contemplated the greatness of God’s mercy as being loftier than the heavens are above the earth (v.11) ... As he looked up at the stars, God’s grace was immeasurably greater, even as far as the east is from the west, for God has removed from us our transgressions (v.12). Our salvation is couched and secured in His glory.

Of course, coming from the country, David had a special and an intimate understanding of the beauty of nature ... and he knew the reason it is beautiful is because the God Who loves him is its perfect Creator.

When he looks at the birds (v.5), and the grass and the flowers (v.15) and how they ‘flourish’, he cannot help but proclaim, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name”. He Who has created *them* has created *me* (v.2). He has forgiven me my sin, and when I’m ill, He heals me (v.3). From His throne in glory, He watches over His children, “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me” ... His greatness, and also the generosity of God. This was David’s testimony too. Our Heavenly Father knows us all by name and His constant attention is ever with us. Before we knew Him, He already loved us (v.13). He redeemed us from out of the grip of sin, and He keeps us from all that would try to destroy us and He has privileged us with His ‘lovingkindness and tender mercies’ (v.4). He satisfies our

mouth with ‘good things’ and He renews us (v.5) ... All the blessings we enjoy are His gifts for He has privileged us with His own righteousness (v.6), and He has made known His ways to us in His word (v.7). There in the Bible is the *record*, - the *witness*, - to His redeeming grace and sustaining power (v.9-10). There, we learn we are the recipients of His generosity for “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children” (v.17) ... the people He has chosen out of all the nations (v.7).

And David knew well how the rigours of life constantly threatened to dislodge his faith and so he kept reminding himself, and those who will read his words, Bless the Lord (v.1) ... Bless the Lord (v.2) ... Bless the Lord (v.20) ... Bless the Lord (v.21) ... Bless the Lord (v.22). ... As a child of God, never stop blessing the Lord, as the chorus describes, “Praise Him, praise Him, Praise Him in the morning, praise Him in the noontime. Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him when the sun goes down.” ... I will bless the LORD *at all times*: his praise shall *continually* be in my mouth (Ps. 34:1).

This psalm wonderfully describes beyond any human comparison the greatness of God and His generosity, and it also speaks about the genius of God. There is none other like Him! He alone is eternal. He alone has the power to forgive sin. He alone *can* forgive sin. He alone guides and guards His people. He started them on their journey, and He will bring them to the Glory He is preparing for no matter what obstacles arise, He will keep His loved ones for He is ruling His creation in power, glory, and dominion from His Heavenly throne (v.19).

The attention of the angels is also recorded. They have been with him from before the world was created ... faithfully doing His bidding. They excel in His strength, doing His commandments, and listening to His voice (v.20). They never miss a single word for all their concentration is upon God. They are *absorbed* in His holy presence. Throughout all their existence, they have gloried in His service (v.21), and they have known Him as their LORD, and as their King, and as the One Who directs the affairs of all He has created. ... And even creation itself blesses His name ...

“In the stars His handiwork I see,
On the wind He speaks with majesty”.

This psalm is David’s testimony to his relationship with God for from the beginning to its conclusion, his theme of praise is unbroken for, as he began, he concludes ... Bless the LORD, O my soul (v.1) ... Bless the LORD, O my soul (v.22).

Spurgeon's advice to Christians living in troubled times.

Charles Spurgeon knew the horrors of disease and social unrest. Being attuned to the needs of his church, he provided his listeners with a Biblical framework which helped them to understand and respond to the tragedies that flooded over them. Spurgeon's insights still blossom with benefits for the modern Christian.

In his 1866 sermon on the cholera outbreak, Spurgeon noted that "Disease...is a trumpet that must be heard." The sounds of death touched the beggar on the street corner and the politician in her country home. None could escape its noise. Events like cholera, the coronavirus, and riots crash through the barriers of luxury and security that breed "pride, heathenism and forgetfulness of God." They revealed humanity to be weak, vulnerable, and in need of a Saviour.

When asked why God sounded that trumpet of death in 1866, Spurgeon replied,

"If you ask me what I think to be the design, I believe it to be this—to waken up our indifferent population, to make them remember that there is a God, to render them susceptible to the influences of the gospel, to drive them to the house of prayer, to influence their minds to receive the Word, and moreover to startle Christians into energy and earnestness, that they may work while it is called to-day."