

Faith on Trial

Studies in Psalm 73
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- I. The Problem Stated.
 - A. Proof text.
 1. *[Psalm 73:1-2]- Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.*
 - B. The Great Value of the Book of Psalms.
 1. Experiences of godly men clearly stated.
 2. An account of God's dealing with His people.
 3. View their experiences as parallel to our own.
 - a. *[Psalm 27:10]- When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.*
 - b. *[Psalm 42:1]- As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*
 4. It's teaching chiefly in the form of a recital of experiences.
 - a. Help in our weariness of soul.
 - b. Help in our inability in receiving more direct instruction.
 - c. Help in trials when we cannot make the effort to concentrate on principles and look objectively.
 - d. We are made to not feel alone.
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 10:13]- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*
 5. The many features of the Book of Psalms.
 - a. The remarkable honesty of the psalmist in relaying the truth of themselves.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:2]- But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.*
 - 2.) *[Psalm 73:22]- So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*
 - 3.) *'I know of nothing in the spiritual life more discouraging than to meet the kind of person who seems to give the impression that he or she is always walking on the mountain top.'*
 - b. Motive of psalmists are not to exhibit themselves but to glory in a triumphant God.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:1]- Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*
 - c. Psalm begins with a conclusion; starting with an end and how he got there.
 - 1.) Starting with the proposition that God is good to His people, to such as of a clean heart.
 - 2.) Then he states that he went astray and then that he came back again. A relatable experience to every Christian.
 - 3.) A description of the soul tormented.
 - a.) *[Psalm 43:5]- Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*
 - b.) In self-examination, he was practicing the godly life; avoiding sin, meditating on the things of God, praying to God, confessing sin with sorrow and seeking forgiveness, yet he was plagued and chastened.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:13-14]- Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*
 - c.) Real torment came when he saw the striking contrast of the ungodly.

- 1.) Their prosperity in the world.
- 2.) No pangs in death.
- 3.) Their strength is firm.
- 4.) Not in trouble as other men.
- 5.) ***[Psalm 73:3-5]- For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death : but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued like other men.***

C. Two Propositions.

1. Proposition 1: The psalmist perplexity in God's ways with respect to men, especially, His people is not surprising.
 - a. ***[Isaiah 55:8-9]- For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***
 - b. ***[Ephesians 3:20-21]- Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.***
 - c. We tend to think that God should be blessing His own children always and they should never be chastised.
2. Proposition 2: The psalmist perplexity in God's ways with respect to men, especially, His people is not sinful.
 - a. ***[2 Corinthians 4:8-10]- We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.***
 - b. The danger that being perplexed opens the door of temptation.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 73:2]- But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.***
 - 2.) ***[1 Corinthians 10:12]- Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.***
 - 3.) ***[Ephesians 6:11]- Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.***
 - c. The blinding effect of temptation from perplexity.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 73:3]- For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***
 - 2.) The power of temptation is that it makes us see what it wants us to see and forget everything else.
 - d. The subtlety of Satan in temptation from perplexity.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 73:13]- Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.***
 - 2.) ***"Christian, dost thou hear them, How they speak thee fair? Always fast and vigil, Always watch and prayer? Christian, answer boldly, "While I breathe I pray; Peace shall follow battle, Night shall end in day" - St Andrew of Crete***
 - e. The apparent logic in temptation from perplexity.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 73:8-10]- They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.***
 - f. The distinction between being tempted and sinning.

- 1.) *[Ephesians 6:16]- above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*
- 2.) *[Hebrews 4:15]- For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*
- 3.) *[Hebrews 2:18]- For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted*
- 4.) *'You cannot prevent the crow from flying over your head, but you can prevent him from making a nest in your hair!'* - Billy Bray

- g. Dealing with the temptation from perplexity.
 - 1.) We must arrive at the right ultimate conclusion.
 - 2.) If we know what to do in temptation, we can turn it into a great source of victory.
 - 3.) *'...my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped'* yet, *'Truly God is good to Israel,'*
 - 4.) *'For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.'* Yet, *'Truly God is good to Israel,'*

D. Applications.

1. Are you ready to say in the face of all trials and temptations, 'Truly God is good to Israel'?
 - a. *[Romans 8:28]- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*
 - b. *[Hebrews 12:8]- But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*
 - c. *[Psalm 66:18-19]- If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*
2. The very essence of the whole Christian position, and the secret of a successful spiritual.
 - a. *[Psalm 73:1-2]- Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.*
 - b. *[Philippians 3:3]- For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*
3. Grant us grace to apply these simple principles to ourselves. We have the greatest and grandest illustration of it all in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. *[Matthew 26:42]- He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*

II. Getting a Foothold

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:15]- If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.*

B. The Uses of the Book of Psalms.

1. Negatively.
 - a. As a psychological treatment.
 - b. As poetry for the beauty of the language.
2. Positively.
 - a. A record of steps of instruction in the Christian walk.
 - b. As an essential discipline in the Christian Life.

- c. ***[2 Timothy 3:16-17]- All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.***

C. Levels and methods of recovery.

1. In sudden temptation, he will take himself in hand.
 - a. Never speaking hurriedly or on an impulse.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 116:11]- I said in my haste, All men are liars.***
 - 2.) ***[James 1:19]- Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:***
 - b. Not too anxious for the mountaintop only to fall back into the valley
2. Seeing a problem, he considered again of what he would say.
 - a. Examined the problem from different angles.
 - b. He considered the consequences of what he would say.
 1. ***[Nehemiah 6:10-11]- Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.***
3. Holding to what he was certain of, he held on at all cost.
 - a. The immediate consequence to his words was offence to God's people.
 - b. Though unsure of God's dealing with His people, but sure that it is wrong to be a stumbling block is a cause of offence to His children.
 - c. When unsure of something, find something you are sure of.
4. Contentment in not solving the main problem for the time being.
 - a. Our speech must be essentially positive.
 - b. Truth is comprehensive and its parts are interrelated.
 - 1.) The relation between prosperity of the wicked and the trials of God's people.
 - 2.) Example of theory of evolution and every biblical doctrine. Accepting the first will erode the second.
5. Never forgetting our relationship to one another.
 - a. ***[Romans 14:7]- For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.***
 - b. ***[1 Corinthians 8:9,12]- But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.***
 - c. ***[1 Corinthians 10:29]- conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?***
6. The importance of having certain absolutes in life.
 - a. There are things unthinkable and must not be done.
7. The importance of remembering who and what we are and what we ought not do.
 - a. We are God's people.
 - b. We were purchased by the blood of Jesus.
 - c. ***[Titus 2:14]- who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.***

D. Application

1. It doesn't matter how low a level, as long as you stand. If you think you are too spiritual to stand so low, you will fall.
 - a. *[Zechariah 4:10]- For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.*
2. Find that small foothold and stop slipping and begin to climb till eventually, rejoicing in the Knowledge of God.
 - a. *[Psalm 73:1]- Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*

III. The Importance of Spiritual Thinking

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:16-17]- When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.*

B. Spiritual Position of the Psalmist.

1. No longer slipping but still being in a low place.
2. No longer in danger of uttering blasphemous thoughts but still anguish of mind and heart.
3. Rebellious thoughts under control but still perplexed.

C. The Sanctuary of God.

1. A literal, physical, material place.
 - a. *[Psalm 74:7-8]- They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.*
 - b. *[Psalm 76:2]- In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.*
2. The place to meet with God.
3. The place where God's honor dwelt.
4. The place where the Shekinah glory of God was present.
5. Sanctuary literally means the building.

D. Lessons in Thinking Spiritually.

1. The necessity in the Christian life to think spiritually.
 - a. Not to approach his problem solely in terms of his own thoughts and understanding.
 - b. Two factors before him: the prosperity of wicked and the miseries of people of God.
 - c. What of the promises of God-the wicked judged and the righteous blessed.
 - d. Dangers in thinking rationally and not spiritually.
2. Dangers in thinking rationally and not spiritually.
 - a. The belief that spiritual thinking is irrational.
 - b. Rational thinking is ground level thinking only.
 - c. Spiritual thinking is equally rational but

E. Principles in Thinking Spiritually.

1. The constant danger of slipping back into merely rational thinking in the Christian life.
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 2:6-8]- Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*
 - b. *[John 3:1-7]- There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a*

teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

- c. *[John 4:9-14]- Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. ****
- d. *[Isaiah 55:8]- For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.*
- e. *[1 John 2:15-16]- Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

2. The promotion of spiritual thinking.

- a. The Sanctuary of God.
 - 1.) The consideration of fellow believers and where they were.
 - 2.) The hastening to the Sanctuary of God.
 - 3.) The continual shrugging off thoughts of self and put on though God and His people.
 - 4.) When coming to doubts of God, find others that trust God.
 - 5.) When viewing our troubles, we find others with worse troubles.
 - a.) *[1 Corinthians 10:13]- There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*
 - 6.) We consider the church history and the lives of saints past and their troubles.
 - 7.) It is ordained of God for His people to meet in His house.
- b. The Word of God.
 - 1.) The explicit teaching of the suffering of the Godly.
 - a.) *[2 Timothy 3:12]- Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*
- c. Prayer and Meditation.
 - 1.) Actually meditation and prayer according to George Müller. Prepare yourself for prayer by meditating on God's Word first.
 - a.) *[Philippians 3:3]- For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

F. Application

1. The steps for right and spiritual thinking are the house of God, the Word of God, the prayer to God and communion with God.

IV. Facing all the Facts

A. Proof text.

1. ***[Psalm 73:16-17]- When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.***

B. Understanding Received from the Sanctuary of God.

1. Not merely feel better but put right in thinking.
2. Not merely forget his problem but find a solution.
3. The message of the Bible is given to the mind, to the understanding.

C. The Trouble with Incomplete Thinking.

1. Thinking ought to be whole not partial.
 - a. Ability to see all facets of a subject.
 - b. *'Who saw life steadily, and who saw it whole.'* – Matthew Arnold
2. Prejudice, the power to pre-judge issues.
 - a. Shutting down all facets but one.
 - b. Blindness to other facets.
3. Examples of incomplete thinking.
 - a. Non-Christians and their unbelief.
 - b. Materialism and viewing only the physical.
 - c. Realm of medicine and viewing only a few symptoms.
 - d. Man as an economic or biological or an intellectual unit.
 - 1.) *'Just when we're safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears,--
The grand Perhaps.'* - Bishop Blougram's Apology by Robert Browning
 - 2.) *'Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.'* – Alfred Tennyson
 - e. Saul of Tarsus and his hatred of the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - 1.) ***[Acts 26:9]- I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.***
4. Not thinking things through to the end.
 - a. Psalmist saw the prosperity of the wicked but not their end.
 - b. ***[James 5:11]- Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.***
 - c. ***[Matthew 7:13]- Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:***
 - d. Nothing so hopeless in the world, ultimately, as the bankruptcy of the non-Christian view of life.
 - 1.) *'Charles Darwin, as a result of concentrating on one aspect of life, he lost power to enjoy poetry and music, and even the power to appreciate nature itself.'*

- 2.) *'The end of H. G. Wells... who claimed so much for the mind and human understanding, and who ridiculed Christianity with its doctrines of sin and salvation, at the end of his life confessed that he was utterly baffled and bewildered.'*

D. The Great Contrast with the Godly Life.

1. On surface seems at first so narrow and miserable.
 - a. *[Numbers 23:10]- Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*
 - b. *[Proverbs 4:18-19]- But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.*
 - c. *[Psalm 37:37]- Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*
 - d. *[2 Timothy 4:6-8]- For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

E. Application.

1. Do not go to church merely to consider your present prospects; consider your latter end.
 - a. *[2 Timothy 4:8]- henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*
2. Look at the two ultimate possibilities as a whole and go immediately to God and confess your blindness, your prejudice, and your folly in trusting your own understanding.

V. Beginning to Understand

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:18-20]- Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.*

B. Aspects in which Right Thinking Comes.

1. Our ignorance of Church History.
 - a. God's triumph over His enemies.
 - 1.) Judgment on the wicked and the just.
 - 2.) Resurrection of Christ, the ultimate victory over Satan and his powers.
 - 3.) The Acts of the Apostles.
 - 4.) Culminating Glory seen in Revelation
 - b. The building of His true church after the times of the Apostles.
 - 1.) All of foiled attempts to exterminate the Christian Church
2. Increased understanding of meaning of church history.
 - a. Even the evil powers are under God's Hand.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:18]- Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.*
 - 2.) *[Proverbs 8:15]- By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.*
 - b. The doctrine of Providence.

- 1.) *'That continued exercise of all the divine energy whereby the Creator upholds all His creatures, is operative in all that transpires in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.'*
 - 2.) ***[Psalm 76:10]- Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.***
- c. The precarious and dangerous position of the ungodly.
- 1.) ***[Psalm 73:18]- Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.***
 - 2.) All they have is temporary. Age, decay, death, and judgment are certain.
 - 3.) ***[Hebrews 11:25]- By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;***
 - 4.) ***[Psalm 99:1]- The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved.***
- C. The Adjustments to our Thinking.
1. Attitude towards the Character of God.
 - a. The Power of God. The Lord Reigneth.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 77:7-9]- Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?***
 - 2.) Is God unable to do or is He unwilling to do a certain thing?
 - 3.) Remembering the greatness and the power of God.
 - a.) Attitude changed, *'Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places:'*
 - b.) ***[Psalm 50:1]- The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.***
 - c.) ***[Job 28:9-11]- He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light.***
 - d.) ***[Genesis 1:1]- In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.***
 - b. The Righteousness and Power of God.
 - 1.) The order of questions.
 - a.) If God has the power, why does He not exercise it?
 - b.) If God has the ability to destroy all His enemies, why does He allow them to do the things they do?
 - c.) Why are the ungodly allowed to flourish?
 - d.) What about the justice and righteousness of God?
 - 2.) The answers.
 - a.) ***[Genesis 18:25]- That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?***
 - b.) ***[James 1:13,17]- Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.***
 - 3.) The ever faithful and sure covenant and promises of God.
 - a.) ***[Titus 1:2]- in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;***

- b.) *'for his mercies aye endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.'*
 - 4.) God's indirect and direct works.
 - a.) *[Psalm 73:23]- Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.*
- 2. Attitude towards God's working in the ungodly specifically.
 - a. A daring anthropomorphism.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:20]- As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.*
 - 2.) *[Psalm 74:22]- Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.*
 - 3.) *[Psalm 44:23]- Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise; cast us not off for ever.*
 - b. A digression into free will of man.
 - 1.) An answer to God's lack of intervention in the time of Hitler.
 - 2.) An answer to doctrines of grace and especially predestination and election.
 - 3.) Same people not wanting God's control over them, want God to exert His power and might over other people.
 - c. God's appearance of sleep while the ungodly flourish?
 - 1.) So that sin is revealed for what it truly is in its ugliness.
 - a.) *[Romans 1:28]- And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*
 - 2.) As a punishment for sin.
 - a.) *[Romans 1:32]- who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*
 - b.) *[Isaiah 48:22]- There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.*
 - c.) *[Hosea 8:7]- For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.*
 - 3.) To make the overthrow of the wicked more complete and sure.
 - a.) The discomfiture of the enemy is greater then and more complete.
 - 4.) To display His own greatness and glory in the defeat of such a great and mighty enemy.
 - a.) *[Acts 12:21-24]- And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied.*
 - 5.) To discipline His own people.
 - d. What God does when He 'wakes'
 - 1.) Despising the image of the ungodly.
 - a.) *[Isaiah 40:15,22]- Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof*

are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

- b.) Example of Great Britain, USA and USSR.
- c.) Example of Alexander the Great.

1.) [Daniel 8:8]- Therefore the he goat waxed very great : and when he was strong, the great horn was broken ; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

D. Application

1. The great events of history are but a pale adumbration, and at the same time, a mighty warning, of what is to happen.
 - a. The world is godless, Christless, ridicules the grace of God an the Savior of the world and especially, the blood of the Cross.
 - b. *[2 Thessalonians 1:4-10]- so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*
2. The certainty of the Lord coming and His enemies will be scattered and routed.
 - a. *[2 Thessalonians 1:9]- who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*
3. Thank God that His promises are ever sure.

VI. Self-examination

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:21-22]- Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

B. The Adjustments to our Thinking Continued.

1. Previously adjustments to our right thinking about God and the ungodly.
2. The Adjustments to our Thinking about Ourselves.
 - a. A striking contrast
 - 1.) Outside the sanctuary.
 - a.) *[Psalm 73:13-14]- Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*
 - 2.) Inside the sanctuary.
 - a.) *[Psalm 73:21-22]- Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*
 - b. Man's account of his repentance.
 - 1.) What he says about himself.
 - 2.) What he says about his recent conduct.
 - 3.) Two dangers or extremes in repentance.

- a.) Morbidity and introspection.
 - 1.) Always analyzing and condemning themselves.
 - 2.) Being conscious only of their unworthiness and lack of fitness.
 - 3.) Always taking their spiritual pulse and temperature.
 - 4.) *'What can these anxious cares avail thee,
These never-ceasing moans and sighs?
What can it help, if thou bewail thee
O'er each dark moment as it flies?
Our cross and trials do but press
The heavier for our bitterness.'* – Georg Neumark ***
- b.) Absence of true godly sorrow for sin along with tendency to spare ourselves
 - 1.) *[Jeremiah 6:14]- They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.*
 - 2.) *[Ezekiel 13:10]- Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:*
 - 3.) To spare ourselves and regard our sins and shortcomings lightly.
 - 4.) *'Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed,
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.'* – Thomas Kelly ***

C. The Need for True Repentance.

- 1. Examples of repentance.
 - a. The Prodigal Son.
 - 1.) *[Luke 15:17-19]- And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*
 - b. The Church in Corinth.
 - 1.) *[2 Corinthians 7:9-11]- Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*
 - c. Job.
 - 1.) *[Job 42:6]- wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*
 - d. Paul.
 - 1.) *[Romans 7:24]- O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

D. The Steps of True Repentance.

1. Confession of Sin.
 - a. *'So foolish was I, and ignorant:'*
2. Analyzing details of sin and all it involves and implies.
 - a. *'I was as a beast before thee.'*
 - b. Particularize and descend to details. See John Fletchers 12 Questions
 - 1.) Did I awake spiritual, and was I watchful in keeping my mind from wandering this morning when I was rising?
 - 2.) Have I this day got nearer to God in times of prayer, or have I given way to a lazy, idle spirit?
 - 3.) Has my faith been weakened by unwatchfulness, or quickened by diligence this day?
 - 4.) Have I this day walked by faith and eyed God in all things.
 - 5.) Have I denied myself in all unkind words and thoughts; have I delighted in seeing others preferred before me?
 - 6.) Have I made the most of my precious time, as far as I had light, strength and opportunity?
 - 7.) Have I kept the issues of my heart in the means of grace, so as to profit by them?
 - 8.) What have I done this day for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints?
 - 9.) Have I laid out anything to please myself when I might have saved the money for the cause of God?
 - 10.) Have I governed well my tongue this day, remembering that in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin?
 - 11.) In how many instances have I denied myself this day?
 - 12.) Do my life and conversation adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - c. View all of it all in the sight of God.
 - 1.) ***[2 Corinthians 7:11]- For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.***
 - 2.) ***[1 Corinthians 9:27]- but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.***
 - d. The cause of all troubles is 'self'
 - 1.) When self takes control of us, something inevitable happens-the heart controls our thinking.
 - 2.) 'Self' asserting itself, reverses of the true order and of the right sense of proportion.
 - 3.) Discovery in the Sanctuary of irrational thought governed by his feelings.
 - 4.) ***[Philippians 4:6-7]- Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***
 - e. 'Self' cannot stand up to a real intellectual examination.
 - 1.) *'He that is down, needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride.'* – John Bunyan

E. Application.

1. We must be careful and watch our hearts.
 - a. ***[Proverbs 23:26]- My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.***
 - b. ***[Jeremiah 17:9-10]- The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.***

- c. *[John 3:19]- And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*
 - d. *[Proverbs 4:23]- Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*
 - e. *[Psalm 51:10]- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*
2. Once a man gets to know himself and the blackness and deceitfulness of his own heart, he knows that he has to fly to Christ.
 3. Thank God for a gospel that can give a man a new heart and renew a right spirit within him.

VII. Spiritual Allergy

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:21-22]- Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

B. A Detailed Discovery of Self.

1. He was causing his own troubles and unhappiness.
 - a. He found in the sanctuary of God that his troubles weren't the ungodly, but himself.
 - b. Something happened to his heart and to his 'reins' or kidneys (another seat of feelings and emotions).
 - c. More accurately, that he had something to himself. 'I have soured my heart, and I was preparing myself for a piercing pain.'
 - d. We tend to produce and exacerbate our own troubles
 - e. *'Two men looked out from prison bars.
The one saw mud, the other stars' – Dale Carnegie*
2. He was holding on to his misery and unhappiness because it gives him some perverted enjoyment.
 - a. We are still protecting and magnifying self.
 - b. The opposite of Paul's blessed condition.
 - 1.) *[Philippians 4:11-13]- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
 - c. The opposite of the teaching of Jesus.
 - 1.) *[Luke 9:23]- And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*
3. He had become foolish or stupid, an irrational beast.
 - a. Behaving instinctively to a given stimulus.
 - b. Not putting an interval between the stimulus and the response.
 - c. Not thinking logically, clearly and spiritually.
 - 1.) The distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian.
 - d. Holding to an idea of the godly life that is false.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:13]- Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.*
 - 2.) We take blessings of God for granted and grumble and complain at trouble.
 - 3.) We assume we have a right to these blessings.
 - 4.) Not immediately looking for a reason or an explanation for troubles and concluding God's purpose.
 - 5.) Christians should never have trouble and the ungodly should have constant trouble.

a.) *[Philippians 1:29]- For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

e. Always disliking discipline.

1.) *[Hebrews 12:8]- But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

2.) *[Psalm 119:71]- It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

4. He was ignorant.

a. Of the true position of the ungodly.

b. About God.

c. About himself.

d. About the nature and purpose of the life he was living.

e. Of everything the Bible says about the godly life.

f. Especially ignorant of the New Testament Epistles.

5. As a beast before Thee.

a. Forgot God's omnipresence.

1.) *[Psalm 73:22]- So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

b. Forgot God's omniscience.

1.) *[Hebrews 4:12-13]- For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

c. Forgot the greatness of God.

d. Forgot the love and goodness of God.

C. Application

1. Look to the Prodigal Son after he came to himself.

a. *[Luke 15:17-19]- And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

2. Let us face it; let us unmask it; let us analyze it and face ourselves with it.

3. The trouble with many of us is that we heal ourselves too quickly.

a. We feel we have the right to be forgiven.

b. *[1 Timothy 1:15]- This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

c. *[Luke 18:13]- And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ****

VIII. Nevertheless

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:23-24]- Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

B. The Blessedness of the word 'Nevertheless'.

1. Introduces the gospel.

2. The difference between knowing the gospel and not knowing it.
 3. A good way of determining if one is a Christian or not.
 4. The point at the end when the door of hope opens.
 5. The vital connecting link between what is to follow and what has gone before.
- C. The Power of the word 'Nevertheless'.
1. Halted his self-condemnation.
 - a. *'I was as a beast before thee,'*
 2. The delivering word.
 - a. *'Nevertheless I am continually before Thee'*
 - b. God did not dismiss him.
 - c. He did not receive the fate he so richly deserved.
- D. The Doctrine of Grace Exhibited.
1. God's Saving Grace. In spite of all that was true of him:
 - a. God forgave him and allowed him in His presence.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 103:10]- He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*
 - 2.) *[Psalm 130:3]- If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*
 - b. God loved him because God's name is love.
 - 1.) *[John 3:16]- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*
 - c. God had mercy on His enemy.
 - 1.) *'A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
My person and off'ring to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.'* - Augustus Montague Toplady
 - d. One way to approach God.
 - 1.) *[Luke 15:21]- And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*
 - 2.) God showed goodness and kindness to the undeserved.
 - a.) God was moved nothing but His own love, His own compassion, His own mercy and His own grace.
 - e. The Christian defined.
 - 1.) A man who realizes that although he can't forgive himself, God has forgiven him.
 - 2.) *'A man amazed that God has forgiven him.
A man who doesn't take forgiveness for granted
Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.'* - Charlotte Elliott
 - 3.) *'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;*

*Foul, I to the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'* - Augustus M. Toplady

4.) [Romans 5:8]- But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

2. God's Restraining Grace

- a. God holds and restrains from falling.
- b. God steadies at the moment just before the final fall.
- c. God puts the thought into the mind and the thought holds back.
- d. The Backslider described.

1.) [Psalm 37:24]- Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

2.) [1 Corinthians 5:1,5]- It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

3. God's Restoring Grace.

- a. God not only held him put at the vital point, pulled him back.
- b. His understanding was a result of going to the sanctuary of God.
- c. His going to the sanctuary was a result of God's restoring grace.
- d. God restores us to fellowship-with Himself and with His people and gives back lost joy.
- e. **[2 Samuel 12:7,13]- And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.**
- f. **[Psalm 51:2-4,12]- Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.**
- g. God brings the soul back again, according to His own wondrous love and His amazing kindness

E. Application.

- 1. Is not our ignorance our main trouble? Reverse your thinking and see that God has done it all.
- 2. Look beyond your decision and see it was the grace of God that made you decide.
- 3. You must realize that it is God that works in you.
 - a. **[Philippians 2:13-14]- for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings**
- 4. Thank God for His amazing grace-saving, restraining, wonderful, restoring grace.

IX. The Final Perseverance of the Saints

A. Proof text.

1. [Psalm 73:24]- Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

B. The Inevitable Next Step.

- 1. The Past and Future Realized.
 - a. If we can't see the Psalmist's future, then we have difficulty in understanding the past.
 - b. The Christian life as a whole.
 - c. The Indivisible Doctrine of Grace

2. Why has God restrained me? Why has God restored me?
 - a. Because He is my Father and I am His child.
 3. Because it is true, He must go on doing the same in the future.
- C. The Source of Joy and Comfort and Consolation for God's people.
1. Sustained the saints in New Testament era.
 2. Held and stimulated God's people.
 3. Explains the greatest exploits of in the annals of Christian Church.
- D. Afterward received in Glory.
1. Example of Noah.
 - a. *[Hebrews 11:7]- By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*
 2. *[Hebrews 11:13-16]- These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*
- E. Evidences of Perseverance of the Saints.
1. *[John 10:28-29]- and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*
 2. 'Don't let the things you are uncertain of rob you of that of which you are certain.' - Lord Francis Bacon
 3. *[Romans 8:30]- Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
 4. *[Philippians 1:6]- being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*
 5. *[1 Peter 1:5]- who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
- F. The Truths from the Perseverance of the Saints. (What's gained of God cannot be lost.)
1. The Unchanging Will of God.
 - a. *[Romans 11:29]- For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*
 - b. *[James 1:17]- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*
 - c. *What God wills, God does; what God purposes, God executes.*
 - d. *[Exodus 3:14]- And God said unto Moses, I AM that I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.*
 2. The Great Purpose of God.
 - a. To save such as believe.
 - b. The division, the judgment, the separation between God's people and those not God's people.
 3. The Great Power of God.
 - a. Over the god of this world.
 - b. Over sin.

- c. Over temptations, insinuations, the whole outlook, the whole bias.
 - d. A power that is invincible, illuminable, and endless.
 - 1.) *[Ephesians 1:18-19]- the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 3:20]- which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*
4. The Great Salvation of God.
- a. Through the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ.
 - 1.) *[Romans 5:10]- For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*
 - 2.) *[Romans 8:32]- 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?*
 - 3.) *[1 Corinthians 15:55-58]- O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
5. The Great Union with Christ.
- a. *[Romans 5:16-17]- And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*
 - b. *[Romans 6:22-23]- But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 - c. *[2 Peter 1:4]- whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

G. Application.

- 1. How does God sustain us?
 - a. He leads us; He guides us; He restrains us; He works within us.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:24]- Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*
 - 2.) *[Philippians 2:12-13]- Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*
 - 3.) *[2 Peter 1:3]- According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*
 - 4.) *[1 Corinthians 11:28-30]- But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*
 - 5.) *[Hebrews 12:6]- for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*
- 2. What does all this process lead to?
 - a. The glory here and now-The gifts, graces and fruit of the Spirit.

- 1.) *The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.*

*The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heav'nly fields,
Or walk the golden streets. – Isaac Watts*

- b. Will lead to glory to come.
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 4:8]- henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*
 - 2.) *[Galatians 5:5]- For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*
 - 3.) *[Ephesians 1:18]- the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*
3. The dangers of the doctrine to some.
 - a. “Well, as I am saved, it does not matter what I do.”
 - 1.) *[1 John 3:3]- And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*
 - 2.) *[Matthew 5:8]- Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*
4. God grant that we all, as we look back at our past ‘Ebenezers’, may enjoy this blessed certainty that He cannot, He will not forsake us.
 - a. *[1 Samuel 7:12]- Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer [the stone of help], saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*
 - b. *His love in time past forbids me to think
he'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through. – John Newton*
 - c. *“The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.”*

X. The Rock of Ages

A. Proof text.

1. *[Psalm 73:25-26]- Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

B. The Topmost Level.

1. The dangers of prejudice toward Old Testament saints.
 - a. We are ‘in Christ’ we have received the Holy Spirit and they are lesser for it.
 - b. Look to the Psalms and ask if you have come to a knowledge and experience of God that the palmists have.
 - c. While reading the Psalms, do you feel ashamed and sense wandering not wonder.

- d. The Gospel's end is to ultimately bring us to this position, *'Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'*
 - 1.) To be satisfied in anything short of this is to deny the gospel itself.
 - 2.) ***[John 20:29]- Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.***
2. The Utmost Position Described.
 - a. The negative.
 - 1.) There is no one who can help or save him like the Savior.
 - 2.) There was an emptiness about his life-no satisfaction, no blessing, no strength
 - 3.) The backslider, because of his relationship with God, can never really enjoy anything else.
 - a.) ***[2 Corinthians 5:17]- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***
 - b.) ***[Jeremiah 2:13]- For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.***
 - b. The positive.
 - 1.) Desire God Himself, not only what God gives or does.
 - 2.) No longer put what God does in the place of God Himself.
 - 3.) Desire God over His forgiveness.
 - 4.) Desire God over His blessings.
 - a.) ***[Psalm 42:1-2]- As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?***
 - 5.) Desire knowing God over knowing of Him.
 - a.) ***[Philippians 3:10]- that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;***
 - b.) ***[John 17:3]- And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.***
 - 6.) Desire fellowship with God and Christ Jesus over any other.
 - a.) ***[1 John 1:3-4]- that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.***
 - 7.) Love God over any other.
 - a.) ***[Matthew 22:37,39]- Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.***
 - 8.) Desire not only God Himself, but desire nothing but God.
 - a.) What are you looking for and hoping for in heaven?
 - b.) *'We are never told in the Scriptures that we should look forward to death; but we are told very frequently that we should look forward to heaven.'* – Matthew Henry
 - c.) Desire heaven's rest, heaven's freedom from trouble, heaven's peace, heaven's joy; but above all, desire the face of God.
 - d.) ***[Matthew 5:8]- Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.***
 - e.) ***[Philippians 1:23]- For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:***
 - f.) Why is heaven not described more in the Scriptures?

- 1.) In our sinful state, heaven would be misunderstood.
 - 2.) It is often idle curiosity.
 - 3.) No know heaven, know Christ.
- c. The essence of the psalmist's previous trouble.
- 1.) There was something he desired in heaven and on earth other than God.
 - a.) *[Psalm 73:3-4]- For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.*
3. The Utmost Position Experienced.
- a. Disciple of Christ.
 - 1.) *[Luke 14:26]- If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*
 - b. Fellowship with Christ.
 - 1.) *[Philippians 4:11,13]- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*
 - c. Satisfaction with God.
 - 1.) *[Psalm 73:26]- My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*
 - 2.) 'Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like thee His praise should sing?' – Henry Francis Lyte
 - 3.) *[Psalm 103:22]- Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.*
 - d. Confidence in God.
 - 1.) Our strength, 'Rock of my heart.'
 - 2.) Our foundation, 'Underneath are the everlasting arms.'
 - 3.) *[Isaiah 28:16]- therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*
 - 4.) *My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*When darkness seems to veil His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.*

*His oath His covenant and blood
Support me in the 'whelming flood:
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay. – Edward Mote*

C. Application

1. Do you know and experience this confidence, satisfaction, fellowship, and discipleship?
2. Do you only know the confidence, satisfaction, fellowship, and discipleship of men and the world?

3. Let us live on nothing; let us trust nothing, but Him. He is the Rock of ages, the everlasting God.

XI. The New Resolution

A. Proof text.

1. ***[Psalm 73:27-28]- For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.***

B. The Psalmist's Conclusion.

1. The Message from Divine Wisdom
2. His ultimate conclusion is the central message in the Bible.
3. Two possible views and ways of life.

C. The Psalmist's Resolution.

1. It is good for me to draw near to God.
2. The contrast- '*they that are far from thee shall perish*'
3. The two positions-either near to God or far from Him and no other.
4. Psalmist's sad experience was the result of not keeping near to God.
5. Our happiness not depending upon conditions and events.
6. The only prosperity needed was nearness to God.
7. Reasons for keeping near God.
 - a. The contemplation of the fate of those staying far from God.
 - 1.) '*The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind small.*' - Sextus Empiricus
 - 2.) ***[Hebrews 11:24-26]- By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.***
 - 3.) '*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see:
O thou who changest not, abide with me!*' – Henry Francis Lyte
 - b. The contemplation of the character of God.
 - 1.) An element in religious life.
 - 2.) An element in worship of God.
 - c. The contemplation of the covenant of God.
 - 1.) God's covenant relationship with men.
 - 2.) To see the ultimate blessing of the salvation.
 - d. The contemplation of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1.) Eternal life.
 - a.) ***[John 17:3]- And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.***
 - 2.) Fellowship with God.
 - a.) ***[1 John 1:3]- that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.***
 - 3.) Stability and certainty.

- a.) *[James 1:17]- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*
- e. The contemplation of the blessings of Christian life.
 - 1.) Joy.
 - a.) *[Hebrews 12:2]- looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 - 2.) Glory.
 - a.) *[Romans 8:18]- For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*
 - 3.) God's drawing near to us.
 - a.) *[James 4:8]- Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.*
 - 4.) God's gifts.
 - a.) *[James 1:17]- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*
 - b.) *[1 Corinthians 3:21]- Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours;*
 - 5.) Assurance of salvation.
 - a.) *[Hebrews 11:1]- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ****
 - 6.) Peace with God and peace with others.
 - a.) *[Philippians 4:7]- And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ****
 - 7.) Contentment.
 - a.) *[Philippians 4:11]- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*
 - 8.) Safety.
 - a.) *[Proverbs 18:10]- The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*
 - b.) *[1 John 5:18-19]- We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. ¶ And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*
 - c.) *[Romans 8:38-39]- For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- f. To glorify God to others.
 - 1.) What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. – Question 1 of The Westminster Shorter Catechism.
 - 2.) *[Romans 10:8-9]- But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised*

him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

D. Application.

1. How must we keep near to God?
 - a. A life of prayer.
 - b. Reading and studying the Scriptures.
 - c. Public worship in the sanctuary of God.
 - d. Taking time for meditation.
 - e. Obedience and confession of sin.
2. God's grace to face the future with a heartfelt resolve.