

GOD NEVER CHANGES

Psalm 102:25-28

Intro: For the past two Sundays we have been considering together the incommunicable attributes of God, that is, the characteristics of God which He Himself possesses, and which He does not share with us. He has many characteristics which He does share. These include His love, His grace, His wisdom (although we are not omniscient, all-wise, as He is), His power (although we are not omnipotent, all-powerful, as He is), His righteousness, and His holiness—to name a few of His attributes. All of the characteristics of God He possesses in perfection. With us they will never reach that state in this life, but we as His people share many of His attributes in an increasing way.

But some of God's attributes He does not, and cannot, share with us, because they are characteristics which belong to Deity alone. His eternity, for example. His omnipresence, that characteristics of God which means that He is “present everywhere at once.” And this means *completely* present everywhere. Included in this we find theologians speaking of *the immensity of God*, or *the immanence of God*. All of these terms actually are different ways of saying that *God is everywhere. He is omnipresent in the wholeness of His Person*. Therefore we can speak of God being in heaven, and yet being with us at the same time, and being everywhere at the same time in the completeness of His Person.

Today I want to take up a third incommunicable attribute of God. This we call:

I. GOD'S IMMUTABILITY.

One theologian has correctly explained this as meaning that God “is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises” (Berkhof, L., *Systematic Theology*, p. 58). And then the same writer went on to say:

Even reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, since a change is either for better or for worse. But in God, as the absolute Perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible (*Ibid.*).

Henry Lyte, who wrote the well known hymn, *Abide With Me*, was recognizing the unchanging and unchangeable character of God when he penned those words,

Change and decay in all around I see;

O Thou Who changes not, abide with me.

That is true, isn't it, even with respect to this world. The only time you see change for the better is when a person is drawn to Christ and made a new creature in Him. But most of the time change is accompanied by a worsening of things, and that is true of people too. But you never see that in God. He never learns because He already knows everything. He knows the end from the beginning. His is infinitely wise. He never gets stronger because He always has been and always will be *all-powerful, omnipotent*. And we could go through the attributes of God. They are all perfect, because He is holy. They cannot get better because you cannot improve upon perfection. And they surely cannot get worse, they cannot decay, because that would mean imperfection which in turn would make Him less than God!

Now let us turn to the Scriptures. I hope all of you have recognized that what we have been learning about God has to have the support of Scripture. Scripture is our ultimate, our final, our conclusive authority for all that we know about God. God is unchanging and unchangeable only if this is what is taught about Him in the Bible. So let us examine:

II. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ABOUT GOD'S IMMUTABILITY.

I begin with our Scripture reading:

A. Psalm 102:25-28.

Before I call your attention to the last four verses of the Psalm, I want you to be sure to notice verse 12. The Psalmist was speaking here mainly about *the eternity of God* which we considered two weeks ago, but I think that you will understand from the context of verse 12 that the Psalmist was bringing together these two great attributes of God, *His eternity* and the fact that *He is always the same*—never better, never worse, unchangeably perfect!

But the strong statements of this Psalm which teach *the immutability of God* are found in verses 26 and 27. And remember that the Psalmist was not just speaking "on his own," but he was speaking under the sovereign direction of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 25 reminds us of a truth which is taught from Genesis 1 on throughout the whole Bible—that *God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth*.

And most people are inclined to believe that the heavens and the earth are going to be around forever. But they even knew in OT times that it is not true that the heavens and the earth are eternal. See verse 26: "They shall perish." And in the latter part of verse 26, "They shall be changed." Our Lord taught the same thing. In Matt. 24:35 we read,

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

And that statement was regarded by the Holy Spirit as being so important that He had Mark and Luke record the same words. See Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33.

The Apostle Peter taught the same, and the Spirit of God led him to write these words which are found in 2 Pet. 3:10:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But then he added three verses later this statement:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet 3:13).

However, even the OT prophet Isaiah had this revealed to him. This is what we find in Isa. 65:17. He was quoting God when He wrote:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

I think it is true that most people believe that the heavens and the earth have been here evolving for multiplied millions of years, and maybe longer. And while our scientists get worried about the ozone layer, yet most people probably feel that the world and all of the universe will be here forever. But that is not the case. Man's stability is inseparably linked to the earth and the heavens, and to find out that the earth is not going to be here forever in its present state, knocks man's feet out from under him. Even earthquakes terrorize the population wherever they strike.

As we think about this let me read to you from a Psalm which has always been a favorite among the people of God. I will just read the first three verses of Psalm 46:

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the

mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah (Psa. 46:1-3).

— You see, what the Psalmist was saying was that the earth could be removed, but that would not make any change in God. He would still be “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

The world has no security like that. And neither would we IF God were ever to change. But how thankful we can be that such a thing will never happen.

Let me point out another wonderful truth from these verses at the end of Psalm 102. In case you don't remember, the marginal references in your Bible should tell you that verses 25-27 from Psalm 102 are quoted in verses 10-12 in Hebrews 1. But what is very important about the quotation in Hebrews 1 is that they are applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. So Psalm 102:25-27 apply just as much to Christ as they do to God! And that is why the writer of Hebrews could write in Hebrews 13:8, as he did, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” We could translate that, “Jesus Christ is Himself yesterday, and today, and forever.” This is precious, precious truth.

— Going back to Psalm 102 you can tell that the Psalmist was in great trouble. He was in physical trouble. And he was plagued by his enemies. His only hope was in the living God Who had always been the hope of His people. And He took great comfort in the prospect ahead of the people of God because of His promises, promises that would affect the nations of the earth. Because, we must realize that, if God can change, then His promises no longer give us security. But thank God He does not change, never has changed, and never will change. So His promises stand secure to all of the people of God.

But let us go to another passage.

B. Exodus 3:11-15.

— When the Lord called Moses out of the burning bush, Moses obviously was very surprised and had the feeling that he was not at all suited for the task. In Exodus 3 and 4 he presented four arguments as to why he should not do what the Lord was calling him to do—to go back to Egypt, and to lead the people out. What we have beginning with Exodus 3:11 is the first of Moses' objections: “Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh...?” The Lord said in so many words, “It is not who you are, but Who I am!” And

He promised that He would be with Moses.

But Who did God say that He was? Moses had asked what he would say when the people wanted to know the name of the God Who had sent him.
— Look at the Lord's response in verse 14. (Read.) What did this mean?

It meant not only that God was eternal, but it meant that He is unchanging. What He had been when He made the promise to Abraham, and then renewed that promise to Isaac and to Jacob, *He still was!* The passing of time had made no change in God! He was still the same. And as Abraham believed, that what God had promised He was able also to perform. Cf. Rom. 4:21. Abraham had been "fully persuaded" of that, and God wanted Moses to be "fully persuaded" as well.

The book of Exodus begins by telling us that there was another Pharaoh on the throne of Egypt who had not known Joseph, nor did he remember what Joseph had done for Egypt. *And so things changed for the Israelites. But God had not changed. His power had not changed. He had not forgotten His promise to Abraham. Moses was learning about the immutability of God!*

— Let us ask the Lord to help us to understand His immutability, and to help us see how this great truth applies to our lives today. Such knowledge can truly revolutionize our lives and our attitude toward our circumstances.

We have time for one more statement in Scripture, found in both the OT and the NT, a statement which clearly teaches the immutability of God. Let us look first at:

C. Isaiah 41:4.

I am going to begin reading from the first of the chapter:

1 Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

2 Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.

— 3 He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

4 Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from

the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he (Isa. 41:1-4).

The man being referred to here is probably Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king. But the same statement could be made of any just king whom God raised up and used in some great way.

But the question in verse 4 (which is the verse I want you to notice) is, “Who is the One Who has actually been behind this, using Cyrus as His instrument?” The answer: “I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.”

Listen to the comment which Franz Delitzsch, a well-known Hebrew scholar, made about this verse:

Hence the meaning is, Who is the author to whom both the origin and progress of such an occurrence are to be referred? It is He who “from the beginning,” *i.e.*, ever since there has been a human history, has called into existence the generations of men through His authoritative command. And this is no other than Jehovah, who can declare of Himself, in contrast with the heathen and their gods, who are of yesterday, and tomorrow will not be: I am Jehovah, the very first, whose being precedes all history; and with the men of the latest generations yet to come “I am it.”

And then Delitzsch continued:

He is this...God throughout all ages, and is through all ages He, *i.e.*, the Being who is ever the same in this His deity. It is the full meaning of the name Jehovah which is unfolded here; for God is called Jehovah as the absolute I, the absolutely free Being, pervading all history, and yet above all history...in a word, as unconditionally free and unchangeably eternal personality (Delitzsch, F., *Biblical Commentary of the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. I, pp. 160-161).

This same truth is declared in Isa. 43:10-11:

10 Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

The Apostle John in the NT has given testimony to the unchanging character of God. We find it in the greeting he gave to the seven churches

of Asia: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev. 1:4). And he applied the same attribute to our Lord Jesus Christ when he wrote in verse 8 of Rev. 1 that our Lord said,

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Concl: So there is no question but that the Scriptures teach that God is eternally the same, that there never has been any change in God, and that there never will be any change.

But how are we going to explain that before the flood God repented that He had made man, and later, that He repented that He had made Saul king over Israel, and other similar statements? And how are we going to explain the fact that God spared Nineveh when Jonah proclaimed that the city would be destroyed in forty days, and then "He repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10)?

Some statements indicate God's great sorrow at the behavior of men, as in the days of Noah, and as with Saul's continued disobedience. God has always declared that He would punish the wicked, and bless the righteous. And so when the wicked repent, or the righteous act wickedly, God is acting in accordance with His own holy nature. It is not God Who has changed, but man. A part of God's immutability is that He invariably punishes sin, and that He rewards righteousness. Theologians say that although God is immutable, but this does not mean that He is immobile, that is, so fixed that He cannot adapt Himself to changing conditions in people. His love adapts itself to the varying conditions in men, but this is consistent with His nature. God may appear to us to change, but that is also because the Scriptures are adapted to conditions as they appear to us. But we must take our stand on the clear teaching of Scripture that our God is always in every situation *immutable*. What great comfort this affords us as the Lord's people! He will have mercy on those upon whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens. As Augustus Strong, another great theologian has said, "The sun is not fickle or partial because it melts the wax but hardens the clay" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 124). Since God is immutable, as stated before, so are His promises, and so are His purposes. The immutability of God is seen even in that statement our Lord made with respect to our salvation. Cf. John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me..."

THE INDEPENDENCE OF GOD

Psalm 50:10-12; Acts 17:24-25

— **Intro:** One fact that stands out in the Scriptures, and it is confirmed over and over again in life, is *man's insufficiency*. Man, instead of being *self-sufficient*, is *dependent*, is *deficient*, in every way. There is no example of helplessness that is any greater than a newborn baby. If he is not cared for, he will die—there is no question about that. But that insufficiency never ceases. As we grow and learn to walk and talk and to feed ourselves, and then grow into manhood and womanhood, our human pride seeks to convince us that we are sufficient in ourselves. This is where the statement came from that we are the masters of our fate; we are the captains of our souls. But there could be no greater falsehood than that. Experience shows us every day that we are not in charge of our lives. Man is always dependent, and that dependency is primarily and always *a dependency upon God*.

Let me take you to some passages of Scripture which speak of:

I. THE DEPENDENCE OF MAN.

— Actually it is practically impossible to turn to any portion of the Bible without seeing passages which speak of man's helplessness as he cries out to God for mercy and deliverance. Every passage which commands us to trust in the Lord is a testimony to the constant need of man.

It seems that it is a part of the Lord's dealings with all of us who know Him, that He purposely brings us into situations where we will see our own inadequacy and His sufficiency. For example, take David, King of Israel. So many of David's psalms express a child-like faith in God because he recognized his own continuing need and the inadequacy of human help. This is why he said in Psalm 20:7,

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

— The Lord led him through many deep and serious troubles before he became the king of Israel, and those troubles continued after he became king as he faced one situation after another in which he knew that if God did not help him, he would have been destroyed by his enemies. Psalm 34 is a good example of the way David was continually seeking the Lord. We read this in verse 4 of that Psalm, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Then in verse 6 we find these

words: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” And then in verses 17-19 David said,

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

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

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all (Psa. 34:17-19).

One of David’s prayers is found in Psa. 60:11-12:

11 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.

12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

Cf. Psalm 121, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? ...”

It is written in Psa. 127:1,

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

Or what about those words of our Lord in John 15:5?

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing

After what Paul admonished the Philippians to do in Phil. 2:12,

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,

He added this in verse 13:

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And along this same line, after all of the exhortations Paul gave to the believers in Thessalonica, in his first epistle to them, he said this: “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

But this inadequacy of man could not be clearer than it is in when Paul, speaking of his own ministry, told the Corinthians,

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5).

And then let me add one more verse from the pen and heart of the Apostle

Paul:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Cor. 4:7).

Think of the great people of Scripture: Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elizabeth and Mary the mother of our Lord, John the Baptist, John the Apostle, Peter, Paul—and there are others I could mention. But they all had one thing in common: they lived and walked by faith because they knew their own insufficiency, but also the sufficiency of God.

I have spent time on what we are so that we could see in an even clearer light what God is. And so let us turn our thoughts now to:

II. THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

The Lord Jesus said in John 15:5, “Without me ye can do nothing,” but He never said, nor did the Father ever say, nor has the Holy Spirit even slightly intimated that *without us They can do nothing!* The Lord is not dependent upon us in any way. He made the heavens and the earth without the help of a single angel or a single human being. And when it comes to keeping this universe of ours in operation, He does it all by Himself.

Cf. Psa. 19:1:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

If you need help in understanding this, read Psalm 104. We have had occasion recently to look at Psalm 102:25 which says this:

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

Do you remember a verse of poetry that had this to say?

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

There is no question but that God uses our hands and our feet and our tongues, but to say that He has no other way just simply is not true. And to speak of God needing help and having no help but the help that we can

— give Him certainly brings God down to our human level. God doesn't need any of us. He has chosen to use us, but He often works independently of us and of everyone else. J. B. Phillips once wrote a book called, *Your God Is Too Small*. That is one of the main difficulties with Christians in our generation. We need larger views of God. We need to get our understanding of God from the Bible. He is far greater, far more wonderful, than any of us has ever imagined. He is the self-sufficient One. He is dependent upon no one. Let me give you some Scriptures to support that.

Dr. Uchiyama read to us a few minutes ago from Psalm 50. Let me re-read part of it to you, beginning with verse 7:

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

— 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof (Psa. 50:7-12).

I am sure many of you will remember Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill in Athens. This is what he had to say to those pagan Greeks:

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

— 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring (Acts 17:22-28).

— When Dr. Frank James was here for one of our past Spring Conferences, perhaps you will remember that he gave us a new word to learn as he spoke about the character of God. It was the word *aseity*. I looked in several dictionaries which I have, and could not find it. One of my theologies told me that it is from the Latin, *aseitas*, which he said means *self-originated*. I don't particularly like that definition because God is without any origin. He is eternal, without any beginning and without any ending. Another theologian said that the word literally means *from himself* (which may not help us very much), but then he went on to say that it means that *God is self-existent*. Others say *independent*. (See Berkhof, p. 58, and Grudem, p. 160.)

So when we speak of *the aseity of God*, we mean that He is not dependent upon anyone or anything for His existence. He has life in Himself, as our Lord said of Him in John 5:26:

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

— But to speak of *the aseity of God* not only means that "He is independent of all things," but "that all things exist only through Him" (Berkhof, p. 58). This is what the Apostle Paul was saying when he wrote Rom. 11:33-36:

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

— As we have seen about ourselves and all human beings, we are utterly dependent upon God, but He is in no way dependent upon us. Man may think that he has a "free will" so that he can do whatever he wants to do, but the Bible teaches us that God is not limited by us in any way, but is working all things out after the counsel of His own will. See Eph. 1:11.

Nebuchadnezzar had learned about *the aseity of God* when the Lord drove

him from men to “eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws” (Dan. 4:33). Then this is what he said:

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34-35).

The independence of God, His *aseity*, is to be seen in His Name, *Jehovah*. He ever-lives, and never changes, and can ever fail. We are utterly dependent upon Him, and can be at peace because we know that nothing that happens can ever change Him or cause Him to change His purposes.

But this raises a question that should be of the greatest importance to us.

III. DOES GOD’S INDEPENDENCE MEAN THAT WE ARE UNIMPORTANT TO HIM?

Again, it is necessary for us to turn to the Word for our answer.

The answer to that question is one that should bring the greatest possible blessing to us, blessings which, like God Himself, will never end.

A word spoken by Samuel concerning the children of Israel even after they had displeased the Lord by asking for a king, applies just as much to us today as it did then to Israel:

22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people (1 Sam. 12:22).

Psalm 147:11 tells us this:

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

But the greatest proof of God’s love for us is in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ “while we were yet sinners”:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is

shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

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

Concl: Today I am concluding this present series on *the attributes of God*. I trust that you have found it profitable, and that the truth we have covered will be an encouragement for each of you to spend the rest of your lives seeking to know God in a greater understanding of the fulness of His glorious person. Moses seemed to have been overwhelmed by what he had seen of the glory of God after the nation Israel had safely crossed through the Red Sea. And among the truths which He expressed as he led the nation in song was this, which could be our song today:

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Ex. 15:11).

And it seems fitting that we should turn also to the last book of the Bible, and note the song which the twenty-four elders sang to our God:

10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:10-11).

May these notes of praise fill our hearts as we think of the glorious majesty of our God and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And may it be in all of our hearts to seek by His grace with all of the strength God gives us to live our lives from day to day seeking most of all to do what is pleasing in His sight.

“BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL”

Psalm 103:1-5

Intro: Psalm 103 was written by David. We don’t know when in his life it was written, but we know the one to whom it was written. David wrote it to himself! This is a soliloquy. A soliloquy is what a person is doing when he talks to himself. Verses 1 and 2 of this Psalm make it very clear that he was talking to himself. Both verses begin with, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” For David to address his soul meant that he was speaking to himself. At the end of the Psalm he called upon angels in verse 20 to “bless the Lord.” In verse 21 he call upon the Lord’s hosts to “bless the Lord. And in verse 22 he called upon “all his works in all places of his dominion” to “bless the Lord.” But he began with himself. It was important for David to practice what he preached. The power of anyone’s ministry is in proportion to the way in which he is doing what he calls upon others to do. This is true for all of us. If we want others to “bless the Lord,” we must be careful that this is true of our own lives. Let me begin today by directing your attention to this brief, but extremely important command.

I. “BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL.”

What does it mean, to “bless the Lord”?

It means to praise Him. It means to give Him thanks. But the word carries with it more than simple thanks. It is a word expression *adoration, worship*. In the word itself is the idea of kneeling. So it speaks of a great deal more than the thanks that we give to a person when they do something kind for us. Here we are talking about “the LORD,” *Jehovah*, One Who does for us what we could never do for ourselves, and One Who does what no other Person could possibly do for us. He is infinitely greater than we are, and His glory (as we have been learning) surpasses the glory of angels or of men. In another Psalm we have these words:

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand (Psa. 95:6-7a).

Here are two reasons for our kneeling and worshiping before the LORD. He is our Maker, our Creator, and since we are “the people of his pasture,” we know that this means that He is our Savior. Add to this “the benefits,” or *blessings*, which He “daily” loads upon us (see Psa. 68:19), and you can see how much we need to worship and praise the LORD.

But notice how David described such worship. He was speaking to his soul!

Does any of us need to be told that true worship is not just a matter of getting on our knees, or of expressing in proper words our praise. True worship must come from our souls! It is not just an outward form that David was talking about, but a genuine sense of our need to praise the Lord with our inner being. The LORD denounced the people of Judah in Isaiah's day with these words:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men (Isa. 29:13).

David knew that there was the possibility that he could do this, draw near to the Lord with his mouth, but have his heart far removed from the Lord, occupied with other things. And so he addressed his soul, but he did more than that. He added the words, "and all that is within me."

We need to ask ourselves the question, "What is it that I can say that I do with 'all that is within me'?"

An employer is very grateful for every employee who does his work on the job *with all that is within him*. There never are enough workers like that. In these days we appreciate seeing parents who take care of their children *with all that is within them*. It is encouraging when we see a public servant who is devoted, not to his own personal gain, but who with all that is within him is serving his country, or city, or state. We enjoy seeing an athlete in any sport who plays the game *with all that is within him*. But what place do we give to the Lord when it comes to doing things *with all that is within us*? David was obviously troubled about this in his own life. And he began to talk to himself about it. There undoubtedly were other times in his life when he had to talk to himself because he had not been giving the Lord that devotion which came, not just from his heart, but *from all that was within him*.

Haven't you found often as you are reading your Bible, or perhaps when you are praying, that your thoughts turn to all that you have to do on that particular day, or possibly to something that happened yesterday, or any number of things so that you are not reading *with all that is within you*, or you are not praying *with all that is within you*? And have there not been times when the pressures of life have caused you to neglect your Bible

reading, and to neglect your time for prayer, because *all that is within you is focuses on other things which seemed to be more important at the time?*

— But what about this that David was talking about—praising the Lord, worshipping the Lord?

In this connection, let me call your attention to a distinction which King David made in this Psalm which is easy for us to overlook. Verses 1 and 2 go together in introducing this Psalm. But have you noticed the difference between these two verses? In verse 1 David said, “Bless His holy Name.” In verse 2 he said, “And forget not all his benefits.”

Do you see what He was doing? Perhaps he was aware that he had been making a mistake even when he came to the Lord to worship and to praise. But he wanted to correct this mistake. *He did not want to put the Lord's blessings ahead of the Lord Himself.* To “bless His holy Name” is to worship the Lord and to praise Him that He is the God that He is!

— I have just finished a series on the attributes of God. And one reason I am speaking from Psalm 103 today is because I feel that I need, and possibly you feel the same way, to delight more in God Himself, not to ignore all that He has done and continues to do for me, for just to delight myself in Him. When I learn about God's glorious attributes, does the truth about God so overwhelm me that I bless Him “with all that is within me”? That is the effect it should have upon me, *and upon you!* That is what David was telling himself that he needed to do. Do you know anyone but the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has a truly “holy name”? I don't. I don't qualify, and neither do you. We trust that our names have not brought reproach upon His Name, but our names our not holy. The LORD's Name is “holy,” absolutely holy.

Look at the way David spoke about the attributes of God in this Psalm. In verse 4 he spoke of how the Lord crowns us “with lovingkindness and tender mercies. In verse 6 he spoke of the Lord's righteousness and His judgment. Look at verse 8. (Read.) And then read verse 11, and verse 13, and verse 17. Look at the truth in verse 19.

— In all of these David was blessing the Lord's holy Name. This is what it means to delight ourselves in the Lord. To be sure we can't separate the Lord's attributes from the way He blesses us, but we need to “bless” Him *with all that is within us, with undivided attention*, because the blessings we enjoy at His hand are the benefits which we receive because He is the

God that He is. People who worship false gods do not know what it is to bless the name of their gods because their gods are not “holy.”

— However, at the same time David said in verse 2 that he did not want to be guilty of forgetting all of God’s “benefits.” I am going to speak about some of His “benefits” in a moment, but first I want to call your attention to that word. What did David have in mind when he spoke of the “benefits” which the Lord bestows on us?

Well, he was speaking of the blessings we receive from the Lord. Why did he call them “benefits”? Because we are better off, much better off, infinitely better off, since we have them than we would be if we did not have them. You see, it is a great advantage to us that we enjoy the blessings of God as we do. How different, in a bad sense, how immeasurable would be our loss, if we did not have the blessings of the Lord! The LORD has enriched us with His blessings. Spiritually we are rich. Let me prove that to you by reading or quoting to you 2 Cor. 8:9:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

— So think of God’s blessings as His way of benefitting you. He is always doing that which is good for us.

But it is so easy to “forget” all that He does for us every day. Our memory of the ways in which God blesses us is often very short, or we fail to recognize the many ways in which God is blessing us. We all need this word, “And forget not all His benefits.”

David has been speaking of things which we are all guilty of. We all need to go over and over those first to verses of Psalm 103, talking to ourselves, making sure that this is something we do, when we offer praise and worship to the Lord, that we are doing *with all that is within us*.

But before I move on, let me make one more point.

Why was David speaking to himself about these matters? Let me suggest two answers to that question:

- 1) First, because he knew that he needed the rebuke and the exhortation.
2) Second, because he knew that if he were ever to see such failures remedied in the lives of his people, the change had to begin with him. Spurgeon once said, “Before we address ourselves to others we should

lecture within the doors of our own heart” (Vol. 18, p. 601). The king of Israel must do it if he would expect his people to do it. The Spirit of God honors our words if we are doing what we want others to do. Every pastor, every elder, every deacon needs to pay special attention to this. And so does every parent. The key to our ministry to others is to be found in our own obedience to the Lord.

But let me go on in our last minutes together in this service to speak of:

II. SOME OF THE BLESSINGS BY WHICH GOD HAS BENEFITTED US.

I feel certain that David did not mean for us to accept this as a complete list, but he did mention *five major benefits which we have received and continue to receive from the Lord—blessings for which we need to “bless the Lord.”*

A. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities” (Psa. 103:3a).

What could possibly be a greater benefit than this? Sin never benefitted anyone. Only God can forgive sin. But He does not do this simply because He is merciful. He forgives in righteousness because for David’s sins, as well as for ours, a Substitute took our place. Our Lord Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself, paid our penalty in full by the shedding of His precious blood. As a result we are released from the judgment that should have been ours, and have been declared righteous by faith in our Lord’s blood.

B. “Who health all thy diseases” (Psa. 103:3b).

This does not mean that the children of God never get sick, which would also mean that they would never die. But it does mean two things:

- 1) Whenever there is healing of diseases, God is the healer. This is a part of His mercy upon us, but it applies to the unregenerate as well as to the regenerate. It is God Who keeps us in health. God uses doctors and nurses and medicines, and so on, but the blessings always come from Him.
- 2) There seems to be a general agreement among expositors that when we experience physical healing, it is always a foretaste of the time when there will be no more sickness and no more death. The Apostle Paul spoke of this in Rom. 8:18-19, 22-23:

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.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

What a glorious day that will be when our Lord comes and we shall be changed.

C. “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction” (Psa. 103:4a).

What a terrible fate would have been ours if it were not for the redemption that we have through Christ our Lord. But this is spoken of as a work which God has done because He sent His Son. The word “destruction” has to do with the pit. Instead of suffering eternal death, we will experience eternal life. This should always be a subject for blessing God.

D. “Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psa. 103:4b).

In addition to all of the glorious benefits we have in our salvation, God lavishes upon us His many blessings. When we believe not, He abides faithful. His mercies are new every morning. We may fail Him, but He will never fail us. He knows our needs before we come to Him, and He often supplies what we need even before we pray. He delights in showing mercy and love to His people. How can we ever recount all of the many ways He has blessed us.

E. “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psa. 103:5).

The translation of this verse is difficult, and expositors have disagreed as to the exact meaning of the verse. The NASB translates it, “Who satisfies your years with good things.” The NIV renders the word “mouth” as “desires.” The Hebrew word actually means *ornaments*, which Spurgeon applied to the soul. Derek Kidner spoke of it as “the prime of life.” It seems to parallel what Isaiah would write later in Isa. 40:29-31:

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no

might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

It seems that what David was saying in this fifth verse indicated the new nature with its God-given powers, enabled the child of God to live a life not possible except through the saving grace of God.

Concl: Spurgeon concluded his notes on this very important section with these words:

Thus is the endless chain of grace complete. Sin is forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honoured, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God. O Lord, we must bless thee, and we will; as thou dost withhold nothing from us so we would not keep back from thy praise one solitary power of our nature, but with all our heart and soul, and strength praise thy holy name (*The Treasury of David*, Vol. 2, p. 277).

Let us use these words of David and of the Holy Spirit to speak to ourselves, trusting the Lord to use them in our lives to enable us to praise the Lord for His holy Name, and for all of the blessings by which He has eternally benefitted us.

THE TENDER CARE OF OUR LOVING LORD

Psalm 103:6-22

Intro: Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Psalm 103, spoke of verse 8 as “the self-portrait of God.” That could actually be the title of the whole Psalm, especially from verse 6 on. And he pointed out that verse 8 is almost a word for word quotation of Exodus 34:6 which was the revelation which God gave of Himself the second time that He gave the Law to Moses. This is what Exodus 34:6 tells us:

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

However, God is also righteous, and holy, a God Who will not close His eyes to sin, a God Who will bring sinners to account, but it is God’s goodness that brings men to repentance, according to what the Apostle Paul said in Rom. 2:4. God delights in mercy. Micah, the prophet, had this to say about God:

18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19).

Ezekiel is was who told us that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. This is what we find in Ezekiel 33:11:

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

So, while God is righteous and holy, and cannot look upon sin, yet it is His mercy and grace and love and lovingkindness by which He wants to be known. And the more we know about the holiness of God, the more we know about the righteousness of God, the more we will marvel at the mercy and grace of God.

Charles Gabriel, the hymn writer, caught the wonder of God’s character and so he wrote those familiar words:

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me, a sinner, condemned unclean.
How marvelous! how wonderful! And my song shall ever be

How marvelous! how wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!

And so this is another feature about this Psalm that we must notice. We not only have the contrast between God's righteousness and His love, but the contrast between what God is and what we are. We are "oppressed" (v. 6). We are sinners (vv. 10, 12). We are like dust, and as transitory as the grass and the flowers of the field (vv. 14-16). By way of contrast, God's mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting" because He is "from everlasting to everlasting" (v. 17), and, as we read in verse 19 of our Psalm,

The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

This is one of the grand statements of Scripture declaring the absolute sovereignty of God.

Let me point out another fact about this Psalm which we need to keep in mind. With the exception of verse 19 to which I have just referred as teaching God's sovereignty "over all," that is, *the entire universe, this Psalm deals with God in His relationship to His people*. There is a special emphasis upon Israel, as we see from verse 7, but that emphasis extends now to all of the people of God, whether Jew or Gentile. It is as much for the church as it was for Israel in OT times. There are some things that the Psalmist had to say about the Lord's people which do apply to all people, such as the fact that we are made of dust, and that we are like grass and flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow. But still the emphasis is upon those who are the Lord's people. And so you and I who know the Lord today can accept this Psalm as though it were written just for us. See vv. 10-14, and then verses 17-18.

And so now let us consider our text for today, beginning with verse 6.

Verses 6 and 7 take us back to the days of Moses and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. Actually they take us even beyond that time to the journey of the Israelites on their way to Canaan. The people of Israel, His people, were "oppressed." This word speaks of their sufferings and how they were violated, defrauded, treated violently and deceitfully. The Lord is righteous in all that He does. Even in punishing the enemies of His people, the Lord Himself never does what is wrong. Nor does He ever do wrong by us. Jonah felt that the Lord did the wrong thing in forgiving the people of Nineveh. Moses at one time accused the Lord of not doing the right thing. Listen to what he said to the Lord according to Exod 5:23:

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. Frequently it looks to us like the Lord has either failed to do the right thing, or He has actually done, or permitted someone else to do the wrong thing. We are inclined to question the Lord's "judgment." God's "judgment" is His discernment which would enable Him to do the right thing in the right way and at the right time. Even the writer of Psalm 119 (probably David) showed impatience with the Lord when he wrote Ps 119:126:

It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

We all have been bewildered in those times when it seems that God should do something, but He does nothing.

This is why we have to get firmly into our minds that God never does the wrong thing, nor does He ever fail to do the right thing. He is always right in His ways, and the timing and manner of His working is always with the greatest possible wisdom. If we really believed this, it would save all of us a great deal of trouble.

Verse 7 tells us that Moses was learning from the "ways" of the Lord, but the Israelites only realized that God was at work.

Generally speaking there are three kinds of reaction among people, even the Lord's people, concerning what God does:

- 1) There are many people who never see the hand of the Lord in anything. They are the people who talk about "good luck," or "bad luck." They may talk about a storm or an earthquake as something that Mother Nature does. But they do not see the hand of God in anything.
- 2) There are those who know that God is in control of everything, that He is in the wind and the storm. That He gives us rain, snow, sunshine, etc. But they don't learn anything from it. The Israelites in Moses' day were like this. For them it can be said that the Lord "made known...his acts unto the children of Israel." They knew that the Lord gave them manna and quail. They knew that the Lord had opened the Red Sea to lead them through, but they didn't learn anything by what they knew.
- 3) Moses, on the other hand, was learning the "ways" of the Lord. The word "ways" means *God's way of living and doing*. The Lord uses ways with us that will strengthen our faith, and to cause us to trust Him more. He uses ways to increase our love for Him. His greatest blessings often come through trials.

Now as David went on He was speaking of the ways of the Lord.

Verse 8: “He is merciful and gracious.” “Merciful” means that *God is compassionate*. He is *tender*. *He pities us*. This word “merciful” is a kind of a keynote to this Psalm. Because God is “merciful” He is “gracious.” “Gracious” means that He bestows His grace upon us. An illustration of the graciousness of God is to be found in the words of Ezra to his people when it was discovered that they were intermarrying with the Canaanites and other foreign people. And he told the Lord in prayer that even with the captivity which they had experienced “that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve” (Ezra 9:13). This is what it means that God is gracious. And this is what David went on to declare in verse 10 of our Psalm (103).

And because God is “merciful,” He is also “slow to anger.” And then we come back to our key word again: “Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” He *abounds* in mercy. We are talking now about *the ways of the Lord*. He deals with us in such amazing ways because He is the God that He is. This is why if we are going to understand the ways of the Lord we need to understand the very nature of God.

Verse 9: “He will not always chide.” This means that God does not harbor resentments. He is not like we are so often, we keep arguments and differences going instead of getting things settled. Have you ever felt that God was getting even with you for something you did long ago? If so, then you believe that God chides, that He has been waiting for the right opportunity to get even with us. God may be angry with us because of our sinning, but when we forsake our sin and turn in true repentance to Him, *He does not stay angry*.

How thankful we can all be for verse 10. If you and I had gotten the full measure of punishment for our sins, none of us would be alive today. He has not “rewarded us according to our iniquities.” And we know now that the main reason for the truths expressed here is that the Father laid upon His Son, not the iniquity of the whole world, but “the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). David knew this truth, too.

Notice that verse 9 has verbs in the future tense; verse 10 has them in the past tense. So verse 9 tells us what you and I can know that God will never do, and verse 10 tells us what He has never done. These are the ways of the Lord.

Beginning with verse 11 David, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, has given us three illustrations of the “plenteous” (see v. 8) “mercy”

of the Lord. The first has to do with how high the heaven is above the earth. The second has to do with how far the east is from the west. And the third has to do with the way a true father feels about his children, and then He went on to show in verses 14-16 why God is such a Father as He is to us.

The first illustration: verse 11. This verse was written long before there was any space travel. It was written long before we knew what we know now about the heavenly bodies. David was not talking here about the heaven where God dwells, but he was talking about the heavens which surround the earth, the heavens where the sun and moon and stars and planets have been placed by God. We have learned enough to know in a better way how much there is that we don't know. But what David was saying here is that if the atmosphere around the earth, and then outer space beyond that were changed into divine mercy, then you might have a little idea of how vast, how great, how inexhaustible the mercy of God is.

The second illustration: verse 12 – the distance from east to west. How long would we have to go east before we would run into the back end of the west? “Well,” you say, “that is a ridiculous question?” You will never run into the west going east. You may go around the earth to the east, but you will never run out of east and have nothing left but west. That's the point. This is how far God in His mercy has “removed our transgressions from us.” I have heard some people say that when we stand before the Lord we are going to have to account for every sin we have committed. If you believe that then you believe that you can get west by going east if you go long enough. No, dear child of God, your sins have been “removed.” And look as you may, you will never see them again.

The third illustration: Verses 13 through 16.

I love this illustration because I am a father and a grandfather and a great grandfather, and I know how I feel about my children. The OT doesn't say as much about God as our Father as the NT does. But here it says plenty. Do you remember how David felt about Absalom? Absalom was a scoundrel, but he was David's son, and although David's men did not understand David's heart, David loved Absalom. When his men were going out to face Absalom in battle, do you remember what David said? He said, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom” (2 Sam. 18:5). Why did he say that? Because Absalom was his son. And after Joab killed Absalom, and the news was brought to David, did David rejoice? No, he didn't! Instead, this is what David did and what he

said:

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Sam 18:33).

Why didn't David shout for joy because then he could go back to Jerusalem and his throne? He couldn't because he was Absalom's *father*! I can't understand how a father can abandon his children, and yet I have talked to young people in the past who were unimpressed by verse 13, a truly great verse, because they did not have fathers who pitied them.

But fathers, if you really love your children, then you have a little idea of how the Lord feels about you.

And why does he feel this way? Because we are His children through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the first reason. The second reason is because He knows how much we need Him, and that no one can do for us what He can do. See verses 13-16.

But now contrast this with verses 17 and 18. We are dust. And we are like grass and wild flowers who are here today, and are gone tomorrow. "But the mercy of the Lord..."

You know, with the way things are going in our world, I am concerned about my immediate children and their spouses, and concerned also about my grandchildren and the spouses of those who are married. And I have one great grandson who is truly great. And I really get concerned about Nathan and what the world will be like for him—if our Lord tarries. But how, fathers, can you and I have peace for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren? There is only one way. It is because we have a heavenly Father Who feels about them even more than we do, and His mercy which has kept us, will never be exhausted.

But there is still another reason, and you have that in verse 19. (Read.)

Oh, I am so thankful that God is sovereign. And He is sovereign over all! Derek Kidner, whom I quoted in the beginning, says that this word "all" has the definite article before it. So it should be translated, *the all*! And he went on to say that this makes it the equivalent of saying, "the universe" (p. 367). Where is God sovereign? He is sovereign everywhere! So regardless of how bad things might become, and whether or not we

fathers are here, the Lord is here, and He is in control of all events and persons, and His mercy is from eternity to eternity—inexhaustible! How precious is this truth.

— How does the Psalm end?

As it began, only here he called upon angels, and the hosts of God, animate and inanimate, all of the works of the Lord “in all places of his dominion,” to join him in blessing the Lord.

Concl: Please turn to Psalm 146. Notice how it begins and end. Then turn to Psalm 147. Notice how it begins and ends. Do the same for Psalm 148, 149, and 150. These are what are called Hallel Psalms, Praise Psalms, Hallel which combined with Jah, one of the Lord’s Names, gives us Hallelu-jah, a command to praise the Lord..

And now let me read that middle Psalm, 147, which is a commentary on Psa. 103:20-22. This is where we learn what the hosts of the Lord are, and what His ministers are, and what His works are, “in all places of his dominion. (Read.)

— Let this call to “bless the Lord” strike a responsive chord in all of our hearts. And let us praise Him, not just today, but for the rest of our lives, and for all eternity. Some day this universe of ours will ring with the praises of God. What a glorious day that will be when we finally give the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit, the glory for which They are eternally worthy.

Closing verse: Psa. 136:1. Every verse in the Psalm ends with, “for his mercy endureth for ever.”

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“O MAGNIFY THE LORD WITH ME”

Psalm 34:1-10

— **Intro:** As those of you know who have been attending our services regularly, we have been spending a great deal of time recently in the Psalms. If you are reading your Bible through on our schedule, you are also reading the Psalms right now. And perhaps many of you do what I do with regard to the Psalms, you read a Psalm every day throughout the year. It is a precious and profitable practice, and I strongly recommend it to all of you, that is, in addition to your regular readings in the Old and New Testaments.

The Psalms were sung by the children of Israel, and they were highly commended to the early church for singing. Paul, in writing to the church at Ephesus exhorted them with these words:

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

In his letter to the church at Colosse Paul wrote very similar words:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

— And James said, “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (Jas. 5:13).

So the singing of the Psalms was not only prominent in Israel, but also in the church. And for a long time many of the Lord’s people felt that it was wrong to sing anything but the Psalms in the meeting of the church. And there are those that still feel that way. We all should feel a great sense of indignation that the church today to a great extent has copied the world and has abandoned the singing of the Psalms as well as the great hymns of the church. In many churches today the people are sinning by the music they tolerate or even sing themselves.

— Today we come to another Psalm, a wonderful Psalm, Psalm 34. And as we begin considering it, I want to remind you of what it should mean to each one of us as we go through it verse by verse. In Paul’s word to the Ephesians about psalms, he said that we need to realize that we are “speaking to ourselves.” That is, when the Psalms are sung, or when we read the Psalms, we need to remember that we are “speaking to ourselves.” I am speaking to myself; you are speaking to yourself; and together we are *speaking to each other!* We are not just taking up time

waiting for everyone to get here, but our music is a vital part of our ministry. I minister to myself, and you minister to yourself, and we all minister to each other.

— In Paul's words to the Colossian church, he used the words "teaching and admonishing one another." So the teaching is not confined to the preaching so that we are to think that there is no ministry until the pastor or someone else brings the message. Hopefully that will be a time of teaching and admonition as well, but the reading of the Word and the singing of the Psalms is to be a time of ministry. And yet the church today has not only condensed the preaching of the Word into a few minutes, and, in many instances, has abandoned it altogether, but has substituted a lot of godless noise for the Psalms and hymns, and then even dared to call it worship.

I am emphasizing this because I want to remind you of the importance of the singing that we do. You are to be ministering to yourself when we sing. I am to do the same. We are to notice the words, and to pray ahead of time that the Lord will enable us to minister to ourselves as we sing, as well as ministering to others as we blend our voices together in the singing that we do. But remember this also from the words of Paul (and this is *extremely important*): we are to be "singing and making melody" *in our hearts* "to the Lord." You will find that in Eph. 5:19. In Col. 3:16 Paul said, "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

So we minister to ourselves, we minister to each other, and we minister to the Lord Himself.

Please remember this as we go through Psalm 34, and then do it. And I need to do the same. But it is only by God's grace that we will be faithful in obeying what the Apostle Paul has told us to do.

Now let us turn to Psalm 34.

— You can see from the superscription that this Psalm was written commemorating that time in David's life when he acted like a madman before Achish, the king of Gath. The account is found in 1 Samuel 21: 10-15. It was not an experience that David could be proud of, but it is significant that he gave the Lord the glory for His deliverance and did not claim that he had delivered himself by his disgusting behavior. In fact, he does not tell us in the Psalm what the problem was.

For the most part, the first letter of the first word of each verse follows the Hebrew alphabet. It is generally recognized that the Psalm has two parts: vv. 1-10 make up the first part; vv. 11-22, the second part. Kidner says that the first part could have the heading, "Praise with me!" The second part he has entitled, "Learn from me." Spurgeon called the first ten verses *a hymn*; the last twelve verse *a sermon*. We could also say that in the first ten verses we see *David in his relationship with the Lord*; in the last twelve verses, *David's ministry to the people of God*.

The first part, verses 1-10, is divided into three parts. The first three verses contain *David's declared intent to praise the Lord, with an invitation for the Lord's people to join him in praising the Lord*. Verses 4-7 tell us in general terms about *the experience which David had which led to the writing of this Psalm*. The last three verses of the first section give us *David's exhortation to the people to experience the goodness of the Lord*.

In fact, there are really three exhortations which David gave in this section. The first is to magnify the Lord in verse 3. The second is to taste and see that the Lord is good. And the last is to fear the Lord, addressed to the people of God.

This Psalm is a testimony to the faithfulness of God even when we are unfaithful to Him. It is also a testimony that God answers prayer. And we see how abundantly and sufficiently God provides for His people.

Now let us look first at:

I. DAVID'S PRAISE (Psa. 34:1-3).

The Psalms teach us that David's name is synonymous with praise and thanksgiving. The first two verses are a vow which David made to the Lord. He is not just thinking in this verses about the blessings that the Lord had already given to him, but the blessings he was anticipating in the future. The words "at all times" in verse 1, and "continually" in the second part of the same verse, indicate that there is never a time when there is not something for which we can praise the Lord. David would agree with Paul who wrote to the Thessalonian church, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

In verse 1 David mentioned his "mouth." In verse 2, his "soul." The latter

would emphasize the genuineness of his praise (coming from his soul), and the former speaks of the expression of his praise in words which could be heard, both by God and by man.

I have found that people have not forgotten to say “thank you” when you hold a door open for them, or let them in a line of traffic on the freeway. Some take for granted what you do for them, but I have found most people to be thankful. And it always makes it a pleasant experience for everybody when people say, “Thank you.” I think the Lord has made us this way so that we will know how it pleases God when we thank Him for the blessings He gives to us. He not only opens doors in another sense, but He often opens the windows of heaven and pours out blessings which we hardly have room to receive. We couldn’t live without His blessing. He does everything for us! Day by day He literally loads us with His blessings which always are given for our benefit.

But the greatest blessings we have are the spiritual blessings—our salvation, the forgiveness of our sins, His peace which passes all understanding, His presence in our lives, the protection He gives us against sin, and we could go on and on. We need to be thanking the Lord continually, and then talking about the blessing of the Lord to others.

Verse 2 tells us that there is one time when it is legitimate to be boastful. In fact, in this case it is a sin not to be boastful. We make our boast in the Lord. Such boasting is a declaration of our faith in an unfailing God. We know that He will never fail us, and we say so. We know that He is able to do more than we can ask or think, and we say so. We know that the things which are impossible with man are possible with our God, and we say so.

What is the response? The humble, the truly humble, to whom boasting is offensive, are glad when they hear us boasting about God because they know it is right. We don’t boast about ourselves because we belong to God, but we boast in God and in His mercy upon us.

There are numerous instances in Scripture of people boasting in the Lord. Do you remember the little Jewish girl who told who served Naaman’s wife. This is what she said, boasting about her God:

And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:3).

There was no doubt about what God could do, and she did not hesitate to boast about Him.

Paul boasted about God when he said to the sailors on board ship in the midst of the storm that the angel of God stood by him the night before and told him that the ship would be lost, but not a man would die. And so Paul said this:

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me (Acts 27:25).

Paul was boasting in his God. God cannot fail because He is God. He has never broken a promise, and He never will.

As David reviewed the blessings of God and the faithfulness of God in his life, he could not help but make the appeal that we have in verse 3. We don't make the Lord any greater than He is by our exaltation and praise of His Name, but we make Him greater in the understanding of people who have no knowledge of Him when we speak His praises and mention His blessings.

Now to back up what he had just said, we have a brief rehearsal of:

II. DAVID'S EXPERIENCE (Psa. 34:4-8).

David, not once, but many times, had sought the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from "all" his fears. These were no small fears, but what we could call *terrors*. On many occasions David had feared that he would be killed, but the Lord graciously spared him.

But David was not alone in this. In verse 5 David spoke of others who had done the same. They were "lightened." That is, what God had done for them could be seen in their faces.

David was referring to himself in verse 6 when he spoke of "this poor man." This speaks of one who has been humbled before the Lord and who sees himself as weak and needy and wretched. It usually takes trials for us to learn how helpless and needy we are, and how dependent upon the blessing of the Lord for our very existence. David "cried," which means *to cry out audibly in distress*. It shows how desperate David had been on many occasions. The Lord heard him, and saved him, not just from some of his troubles, but from all of them. David's experience was to serve as an encouragement for all of the people of God.

Coming to verse 7 we have the capstone of all of David's blessings. "The angel of the Lord" is a title used a number of places in the OT to speak of Deity. And since God has always and only made Himself known through His Son (cf. John 1:18), this verse must speak of the Lord Jesus Christ.

— And it would surely take Deity to be able to encamp around all of the people of God wherever they might be in all of the world. In addition, it is said that He encampeth around those who fear Him. This is a word which is used of our relationship to God, not to one who is a mere angel. To fear the Lord is to reverence Him, to trust Him, to submit ourselves to Him. It is to those who know and love Him that our Lord has promised never to leave nor to forsake. So, in addition to the many ways the Lord helps us, we have His very presence in our lives. He is our great Deliverer. David had experienced the very presence of the Son of God in His life.

This is followed in the first part of the Psalm with:

III. DAVID'S EXHORTATIONS (Psa. 34:8-10).

As I pointed out earlier, we had David's first exhortation in verse 3. Now we come to two more. The first is in verse 8.

— When a person has experienced the blessing of God as David had, he wants every other child of God to share in the blessings that have been his. It is impossible to be quiet about such blessings, just as it impossible not to want others to know the Lord in the same sufficient way.

To "taste" is to trust the Lord, to put our confidence in Him in our daily lives. Spurgeon said that "faith is the soul's taste." We taste of the Lord's goodness when we trust Him. So it is not enough to hear what the Lord has done for someone else; we must trust Him ourselves, and then we will "see that the Lord is good." David was speaking about tasting and seeing the goodness of the Lord when he wrote Psa 27:13:

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the
LORD in the land of the living.

The Lord Jesus was also speaking of tasting in order to see when Martha objected when the Lord went to the tomb of Lazarus and told those who were present to take away the stone from the mouth of the tomb. She reminded that Lord that Lazarus' body was already decaying because it had been in the tomb for four days. And then the Lord said this to her:

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest

believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? (John 11:40).
The world says, and sometimes believers say, "Unless I can see, I will not believe." Even Thomas said this. Cf. John 20:25:

The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

If we want to see the Lord's goodness, we must "taste," we must believe, and then we will see because as David said at the end of verse 8, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

Don't you wish that you had believed the Lord more than you have? I do. But don't you also wish that everyone knew the joy that comes when we do trust the Lord. This was David's appeal to the Lord's people.

His second appeal is in verse 9. It is for the "saints," "His saints," to "fear the Lord."

Spurgeon defined the fear of the Lord with these words:

Pay to Him humble childlike reverence, walk in His laws, have respect to His will, tremble lest you offend Him, hasten to serve Him (*The Treasury of David*, Vol. I, p. 124).

To fear the Lord is to trust Him, and to give no one else first place in our lives. And the promise is that the Lord will not fail to supply any real need ("want") in the life of those who really trust the Lord.

Lions are a good example of the helplessness of men. Spurgeon's comment is good here also. Speaking of lions he said,

They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigour of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hungers, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple-minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practice. "But they that seek the Lord shall not want (lack) any good thing" (*Op. Cit.*, pp. 124-125).

Concl: A passage like this is probably a rebuke to all of us, but we all need to ask what changes need to be made in our lives, and how are we going to make them? Perhaps the lack of praise in our lives is due to our failure to trust the Lord day by day as we should. "Lord, help us."

KING DAVID, THE TEACHER

Psalm 34:11-22

Intro: We began our consideration of Psalm 34 last Sunday, and I want to conclude the Psalm today.

We learned last week from the superscription of this Psalm that it was written after David had disgraced himself and dishonored the Lord when he pretended that he was insane to escape from Abimelech, the king of Gath. If you don't remember that incident, the account is found in 1 Sam. 21:10-15, and you should read it in order to appreciate this Psalm more fully.

In this Psalm we can readily see that David was marveling at the goodness of the Lord (see v. 4) because he recognized afterwards that it was not his ridiculous behavior that had delivered him, but that the Lord had spared him. And so he was encouraging the people of God to join with him in magnifying the Lord (v. 3), to taste and see that the Lord is good (v. 8), and to fear the Lord Who always take such wonderful care of His people (v. 9). This is all found in the first part of the Psalm, verses 1-10. David was telling how the Lord had delivered him (without mentioning specifically the incident), and he wanted others not only to know what the Lord had done for him, but what the Lord would also do for them.

Now when we come to the second part of the Psalm we move from praise and the strong appeals which David made in the first part to the last part in which we see *King David as a Teacher*. And this is introduced in verse 1.

I. KING DAVID, THE TEACHER (Psa. 34:11).

This, of course, is building upon the appeals and the praise of the first ten verses. But let us look carefully at this verse for just a moment.

David's last appeal was for his readers to "fear the Lord." This meant that he wanted them to learn to trust the Lord, and then to please the Lord. This is what he wanted to teach them.

Matthew Henry pointed out in his commentary on this chapter that it was quite unusual and very remarkable that this is what the King wanted to teach the children. This is his comment:

David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier; but he does not say the children, "I will teach you to play on the harp, or to

handle the sword or spear, or to draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state- policy;" but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

And then Mr. Spurgeon added this: "That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves and to teach our children" (III, p. 357).

This eleventh verse sounds like it belongs to the book of Proverbs, doesn't it? It is "the fear of the Lord" that "is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). This is the big mistake the world has always made, and I'm afraid that it is the mistake that many of us who know the Lord have made. The most important lesson that anyone can ever learn, is to fear the Lord. And so King David was not offering to teach something which is of minor significance, but *it is the most important subject in all the world*. That is why the Bible has so much to say about it. We need to know the Lord, and we need to trust the Lord, and we need to be oh so careful that we do not displease Him in anything!

And so David said, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Learning to fear the Lord does not end with listening to what it means, but that is where it starts. And we ought to be so thankful for anyone who can teach us what it means.

But who did David have in mind when he said, "Children"?

We could take this as meaning those who were actually children in age—all children! This is the position which Matthew Henry took, and he emphasized the importance of teaching boys and girls at their earliest ages what it means to fear the Lord.

Another possibility is that David was thinking of his own children. From the book of Proverbs it seems that Solomon had learned many things from his father, and that this was one of them. So David was an example for all fathers. It is our responsibility to teach our children to fear the Lord. We can be thankful for Sunday School teachers and pastors who teach our children, but we must not leave the teaching to others. We must make sure that our children learn this lesson, and learn it well. Fearing the Lord does not mean that we live in fear of what He might do to us (unless we are living in some sin), but it means, as I have said, that we are fearful of displeasing Him. And so we trust Him because that is what He wants us to do, and we seek to please Him in all that we are, what we think, say, and do. So fathers, this is a verse and a Psalm for us. Tell your children

to come and to listen to you as time after time you help them to see the importance of fearing the Lord, and as you lead them to understand how the Lord wants them to live.

— But there is still another possibility as to the meaning of the word “children.” It can apply to all of us as the Lord’s “children.” It is not only our children and young people who need to live in the fear of the Lord, but all of us, regardless of our ages, need to know what it is, and how to do it.

Now it is impossible for us to know which of these might have been what King David meant, whether all children, or his children, or all of us as the children of God. So let us take it all three ways. Let this Scripture have its widest application. However it may hit you, and hit me, let us come now to hear what David had to say, and let us keep in mind that *hearken-ing* means not only to listen and learn, but it means to do what you and I are instructed to do.

All right, now let us notice:

II. THE TEACHER’S QUESTION (Psa. 34:12).

— Teachers often begin to teach by asking a question. Our Lord did this. The prophets often did this, and so did the apostles. Paul was a great one to ask questions. What was David’s question here?

His use of the word “man” does not exclude women, nor does it exclude young people or children. It has the meaning here of *person!* And so it means, “What person is there, young or old, male or female, who does not really want to live a long time, to have a “good,” happy, useful life? If I were to ask you to respond to that question this morning, I am sure that every person in this room would say, “Of course, I want that kind of a life. Every person wants to live a long, happy, pleasant, and useful life.” We all want that, don’t we? We know that we can’t live a life free of trials, nor a life free of sickness, but we want to be able to profit even from our trials and to see God’s hand of blessing turning our trials into that which is good for us.

— A question like this ought to attract the attention of every person who thinks at all about his or her life, and who wants the very best.

What is the answer? Now this is an answer that you won’t find coming into your home by the news media, nor by most of our politicians, nor

from our psychiatrists or social workers. This is an answer that comes from God, and He was gracious enough to have David write it in a psalm, and He has preserved it for us in our Bibles so that today, three thousand years later, we can have the answer that is just as true today as it was then.

The answer is given to us in verses 13 and 14. And by linking verse 12 with verse 14, you can see that if you want to “see good” you must “do good.”

You see, there are two ways that we can go, and only two! We can go in an evil way, or we can go in a good way. And amazingly David began with the tongue. “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.” What is evil? It is anything that is displeasing to God. What is guile? It is telling a lie for the purpose of deceiving others.

Those are two words which we have practically eliminated from our vocabulary today. Who determines what is good and what is evil, or to say it another way, what is right and what is wrong? Is it up to each one of us to decide what is right and what is wrong? Most people think it is, but they are mistaken as they can be. God determines what is right and what is wrong. That which pleases Him is right and good; that which displeases Him is S-I-N! If you want “the good life,” the life which we all desire, then you better avoid what is displeasing to God, in your speech and in your living, and seek to do *only* that which is pleasing to Him. Where do we learn what is pleasing to the Lord? We have it all in the Bible.

Children, young people, adults, all of us, let us listen to King David as he teaches us the most important lesson that we will ever learn. If you want to have the kind of a life you desire, keep even your tongue from sin, but depart from sin in every form. “Do good.” Do what pleases God, not what displeases Him.

But let me tell you something that most of you already know. If you are trying to please God in your own strength, you will find that you can’t do it. You see, we are sinful by nature. We need to be changed in our hearts. We need a new life, eternal life, the life which comes from God. And how do we get it? By faith in Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus Christ came and died on the Cross. He came to save sinners from their sin. He came to make sinners into new creatures, with a new life, with new desires, and by the grace of God, the desire and the power to do what is pleasing to God, and the power to keep from sin which is always very displeasing to Him.

John 3:16 tells it as plainly as it can be said. (Quote.)

Let me say it very emphatically, the life you really want comes when you learn to fear and to please God. But you will never want to please God until you know Him, and you cannot come to Him except through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we have learned from the Bible. But people today are not reading the Bible and so they are looking for the good life doing whatever they want to do, and they find tragedy and heartache instead of that life which they desire. Solomon said it long ago, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). God has given it to us twice in His Word so we won't miss it, but some people have never read it even once, nor have they heard it.

King David then supported his answer with:

III. A PRECIOUS TRUTH AND A WARNING (Psa. 34:15-21).

In these verses instead of speaking about "good" and "evil," King David spoke in verse 15 about "the righteous," and in verse 16 about "evil."

— What, or who, is *a righteous person*? He is a person who lives righteously, who does what is pleasing to God, but he does this because he has become righteous in God's sight. How does that happen? Again let me take you to the Cross of Christ. What was happening there when Jesus Christ dies? It is explained over and over in Scripture. One verse where we have the explanation is 2 Cor. 5:21:

For he [God] hath made him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And this is what produces a change in our lives when God in His grace draws to Himself through Christ. And the change has been explained to us by the Apostle John in 1 John 2:29:

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

So now listen to what David wrote in Psa. 34:15. (Read.)

— And then follow me as I read about the righteous in verses 17-20. (Read.)

The righteous cry (because they have their troubles like anyone else), but they don't just cry, they cry to God, and He hears them. But read verse

17. The Lord not only hears, but He delivers them, “out of all their troubles.” The same is repeated in verse 19. And, as usual, the repetition is not necessary to establish its truth, but to emphasize that it is true. Verse 18 tells us how severe the troubles of the people of God can get. But it always has a humbling and repentant effect upon the Lord’s people. For us as the Lord’s people we can be assured, as Rom. 8:28, that our trials are designed to make us more like our Savior. This is the “good” that the Apostle Paul was speaking about.

And now look at verse 20. This verse is quoted in John 19:36 and referred to our Lord Jesus Christ. There has never been greater suffering than our Lord Jesus Christ experienced on the Cross where He not only suffered greatly in a physical way, but because He was suffering to pay for the sins of His people. It was customary to break the leg bones of those who were crucified to hasten their death. But when they came to the Lord, He was already dead, and so they did not break his bones. This shows the tender and sovereign care that our Lord received from the Father even in the terrible death which He died. And this King David stated for our greater comfort.

But what about the wicked? Two verses are devoted to them: verses 16 and 21.

People have the idea that it makes no difference what they do because, in spite of what Christians may tell them, they believe that they are getting away with what they are doing. *But they are not getting away with anything!* Just as the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, so the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, “to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Then read verse 21 again. What did it do for Sodom and Gomorrah that they engaged in homosexual activities? What did it do for Pharaoh and the Egyptians that they refused to listen to Moses? Who came out ahead, our Lord, or Judas who betrayed Him?

God doesn’t settle all of His account immediately. Some he doesn’t settle in this life, but He always will later—after death. And in the light of the fact that we know that verse 20 refers to our Lord, is it possible that “the righteous” spoken of in verse 21 is also a reference to our Lord? But people might object that they don’t “hate” our Lord. They do if they do not believe that He was Who He said He was. They do if they do not love Him and trust Him as their Savior. It is not enough to believe that Jesus

Christ was a good person, even to believe that He was the best person who ever lived. He was God's Son, and He lived a sinless life, and He died to save sinners from their sins and from the penalty of their sins.

Those who do not believe on Him, those who do not trust Him as their Savior, "shall be desolate." What does it mean to be "desolate"? It means that they will be destroyed; they will perish eternally. The margin of my Bible says that they will be "held guilty." Remember nobody is getting away with anything. We have learned in our study of the attributes of God that He is infinitely wise, omniscient, all-knowing. There isn't a thing in your life or mine that the Lord has missed.

Verses 21 and 22 are the OT equivalent of John 3:16, and of John 6:23.

Concl: Let us go back to King David's question in verse 12. (Read.)

Here, as I have said, is the most important teaching that any of us will ever hear. It is especially needed in this licentious generation in which we live. People think that what they do is their own business; they do not know that it is God's business. The Lord hears every word spoken. We are quick to blame others for the sins which people commit, but the Bible says that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Try as we may, we can't blame others for our sins. The consequences for disobeying God and sinning against Him are terribly high. If Jesus Christ is not your Savior, believe in Him today, and He will give you a new heart with new powers so that you will be willing and able to do what pleases Him, and to keep from doing what displeases Him. Only in this way can you have "the good life."

Let those of us who know the Lord learn more deeply what it means to please and fear the Lord. Only then will we know what the peace of God is, and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

THE LORD, OUR ROCK

Psalm 62

Intro: Normally when we speak of the attributes of God, we do not use the term, *rock*. To be sure it is a word that is different from those we usually refer to, such as, righteousness, or love, or omnipresence. It is a word which is related to *the power of God*, but usually His power in a special sense. You will see it in Psalm 62 in verse 2, and again in verses 6 and 7.

However, it is related to “salvation” and “defence” in verse 2, and again to the same two words in verse 6 (which is something of a restatement of verses 1 and 2). Then in verse 7 David spoke of “the rock of my strength, and my refuge,” saying these were what he found God to be.

It was Moses who first made this title for God famous. He did it in the song which he taught the children of Israel shortly before his death. It was a song which was to be used to call the people back to the Lord when they departed from Him. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 32. Please turn to that chapter and look at these verses with me, if you will. It will help us to understand even more about what it means that *the Lord is our Rock*.

In Deuteronomy 32 look at verses 4, 15, 18, 30, 31.

And then we find a special emphasis upon it again in 2 Samuel 22, the song which David wrote after the Lord had delivered him from Saul and all of his enemies. Look with me at 2 Samuel 22:1-4, 29-32, 47-51.

I am sure that most of you know that the Lord is referred to many times in the Psalms as *the rock*.

In the NT you will remember Peter’s great confession of our Lord when he said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). And the Lord responded immediately by saying,

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:17-18).

Both Paul and Peter use this term in referring to our Lord when they were

quoting from two references in Isaiah to our Lord: Isa. 8:14, but especially Isa. 28:16. The first passages tells us this:

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Isa. 8:13-14).

And this is Isa. 28:18 in its context: Isa. 28:15-18:

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

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.

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

When Paul referred to this passage, this is what he said. These words are found in Rom. 9:30-33:

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Peter's reference to what Isaiah said is very similar:

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto

also they were appointed (1 Pet. 2:7-8).

Let me add one more NT passage. In it the Apostle Paul was reviewing how God provided for the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. This is one thing that he said:

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).

Now what does all of this add up to? Well, the rock will forever remind us of the place where God provided water for His people. But primarily rocks were places of security, place for both defense and also for offense--the most secure place people could find to be protected from their enemies. It was usually the case that the people who had the rock were victorious. That is why David prayed as he did in Psalm 31:1-3:

1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed:
deliver me in thy righteousness.

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong
rock, for an house of defence to save me.

3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake
lead me, and guide me. *Hannah - 1 Sam. 2:2.*

When you think of a rock, don't think of a pebble on the beach, nor even of what we might call a boulder, such as is often found in the ground when an excavation is made for the building of a home. But think of a massive rock such as Crown Point, or even Rooster Rock, or one of the many massive rocks which you will find in the deserts of New Mexico and some of our other States.

Our Lord is likened to a Rock because He is firm and unchanging, and a sure defense for His people.

But now let us turn to our Psalm in which we see the Lord, our Rock.

Psalm 62 is divided into two parts. In the first part, verses 1 through 7, David was declaring his faith in God, and "only" in the Lord, as we see in verses 2, and again in 5 and 6. In the last five verses of the Psalm David was speaking to the people because David knew that what the Lord had been to him, He would be to all who would truly trust in the Lord. See his appeal in verse 8.

Now let us turn to the first part of the Psalm.

I. GOD WAS DAVID'S ROCK (Psa. 62:1-7).

Seven times throughout the Psalm David refers to the Lord as "God." Only in the last verse does he call Him "Lord." And there it is not Jehovah, but Adonai, which was used, as several commentators suggest, when God was addressed "submissively and reverently" as the Lord. But I will deal with that more as we come to the end of the Psalm.

As for the use of "God" seven times in the Psalm, this is consistent with what David tells us in the Psalm that God is a mighty God, sufficient for the needs of all of His creatures and of all creation.

In verses 1 and 2 David declared for himself where he stood in relation to the trials which he was facing at that particular time. It helps to strengthen our faith for us to tell ourselves where our hope is. The word "truly" with which the Psalm begins means that these were not empty words, as such words sometimes can be, but these were words that were real, genuine, and they reflected what the condition of his "soul" was. He was in trouble. Just what the trouble was, we do not know. But he was in trouble. His enemies were about him. However, he was quietly, or silently, waiting upon the God, absolutely confident that the Lord in His own way and in His own time, would meet his need.

And he was not thinking of others who might help him, but he was trusting the Lord just like he would if there were no one else to whom he could turn for help. This did not mean that the Lord might not use his army, nor others who might help him, but David was looking to the ultimate source of his deliverance however it might come.

It is in verse 2 that he began to speak of the Lord in terms of "my rock," "my salvation" (as in verse 1), and "my defence."

In the latter part of verse 2 we see the humanity of David. He did not claim that his enemies did not shake him up, but they did not shake him "greatly." This word comes last in the sentence. We cannot help but be trouble by those who are against us, but we keep steering a steady course. And it is truly wonderful when we can say from the heart what David said in these first two verses.

And from this position of great spiritual strength, David addressed his enemies in verse 2. Probably the idea in the verse is better stated in the NASB. David wanted to know how long they would continue to attack

him, a mere man. Their object was to kill him, and so they attacked him where they thought he would be weakest. It was to them that David was a bowing wall and a tottering fence. All of us have our weak points, and those are the very places where the Devil tries to defeat us. Although they still continued to attack David, they had not defeated him at that point, and David was seeking to show them the hopelessness of what they were trying to do, not because he was so strong, but because he had a mighty God Who was his Rock, his Salvation, and his Defence.

Notice in verse 4 it is “they” against “him.” The “they” are his enemies; the “him” is David. “They” were out to dethrone the king. “They” were men who would rather lie than tell the truth. Outwardly they pretended to be friends, but in their hearts they were cursing the king. How different this was from David whose outward behavior was consistent with the faith toward God that was in his heart. Lying and hypocrisy are two outstanding characteristics of the natural man, and they had been turned upon David with their full force.

In the last three verses of this first part (vv. 5-7), David speaks to himself, emphasizing what he had said at the beginning in verses 1 and 2.

Have you and I not done the same thing? We begin by confidently feeling that our trust is really in the Lord, but the longer the trial goes on, the weaker our faith seems to become. This is where our faith has to be renewed, and one way we do that is by declaring again what we have said at the beginning. And the one we need to tell it to is ourselves. We see evidence here of the fact that God was strengthening David’s faith. This is one of the main reasons why our trials seem to drag on and on. We know that our enemies are right when they speak about us as *bowing walls and tottering fences*.

I have a wooden fence around the backyard of our home, and I have found that it is not a permanent fence. Boards have to be nailed back and sometimes have to be replaced. But David, by God’s grace, was trusting the Lord to give him greater strength. And notice that instead of not being “greatly moved,” as he said in verse 1, in verse 6 he said that *he would not be moved at all!* Why? Not because David was so great, but because he had a great God—great as David’s Savior, great as David’s glory, great as *the Rock of his strength, and great as his Refuge*.

And be sure to notice the word “only” in verses 5 and 6. The continuing opposition that David was facing from his enemies, although outwardly it

seemed like a losing battle, instead of weakening more and more, it was being used of God to strengthen his confidence and faith in God. What an illustration this was of 1 Cor. 10:13! As was the case with Joseph, David's enemies meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. Cf. Rom. 8:28.

Before we leave this part of the psalm, let me comment on the word "salvation" which David used in v. 2, and again in vv. 6 and 7.

Undoubtedly it has the meaning here of the deliverance that David had been expecting from his enemies, but it also has to do with "salvation" in an eternal sense. I have said before that it is perfectly Scriptural to say three things about our salvation. First, that we were saved at some time in the past. Second, that we are being saved, meaning that God's saving work continues in our hearts at the present time. Third, that we will be saved when finally the work of salvation is completed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. *All of us who really know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior are at this moment in the second phase of salvation: we are being saved.* This does not mean that there is anything insecure about our salvation. It does not mean that heaven is not guaranteed to us. But it means that God is continuing to save us, working in us to make us more like His Son.

Like David, we need to be concerned about continuing to trust the Lord, trusting Him in the trials that He gives to us. This is why it is so important for us to know not only that God is our Rock, but that we are taking shelter in Him every day that we live from the enemies which we can see, and from those which we cannot see. Our confidence must not be in ourselves. It must not be in other people. It must not be in our possessions. *Our confidence must be in God alone, and this is a lesson which takes all of our lives to learn.* This is where David was in his life. It wasn't the last trial that he would have, but it was the trial that he was facing then. And he was learning to trust the Lord in a deeper way. David had been strong, but God wanted him to be stronger. God knows what He is doing with everyone of us. We may think that we have learned to trust the Lord in any situation, but the Lord has ways of showing us how much our faith needs to be strengthened.

Now let us look briefly at the last part.

II. DAVID'S FERVENT EXHORTATION TO HIS PEOPLE (Psa. 62:8-12).

I can think of two reasons why we should want to be victorious in our trials. The first is because we want to please the Lord and to be made more like Him. The second has to do with what David was doing in the latter part of this Psalm, and it was stated very clearly by the Apostle Paul in his second epistle to the church at Corinth. Let me read to you some of Paul's introductory words in that epistle: 2 Cor. 1:3-4:

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be
able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort
wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Paul was a great comforter of the saints because he had been comforted by God in his trials. We live in a world where people are constantly tried, and often tried severely. And we pity people, don't we, who don't know the Lord because they are really comfortless in their trials. But that is not the case with us. We belong to "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." And we know what it is to be comforted by Him. But He has not just comforted us for our benefit, but He comforts us that we may be able to comfort others who are in "any trouble" with "the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God."

This does not mean that we have to experience what others are going through in order to comfort them. We may, or may not, have been through what they are going through. But we can tell them Who has comforted us, and how He has comforted us, and so bring comfort the comfort of God to them.

This is what David was doing in verses 8-12. He was encouraging others who were in trouble.

What did he tell them?

First he said, "Trust in Him (i.e., God) at all times." Second he said, Pray. "Pour out your heart before Him." Why? Because "God is a refuge for us."

Now if you are going to trust the Lord, you have to know Him, and you can only know Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Illus: Dr. Chafer's experience with the lady on a train who was involved in a divorce from her husband.

(Call attention to the two times the word “Selah” is used in this Psalm: in verses 4 and 8.)

Verse 9 is a warning against our inclination to trust in men. David mentioned the high and the low to include everyone else in between. It is not that people may not be of help to us, but people in themselves, without the knowledge of God and His Word, are not only worthless, but they can be harmful. Only that which causes us to trust the Lord, is the right kind of advice. We have nothing to hope for from man and his wisdom. Weigh it in a balance, and there is nothing to it.

Verse 10 speaks of the tendency to depend upon money, whether gained wrongly or legitimately. “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Money has been the ruination of more people than we can possibly calculate. It ruins politicians. It ruins athletes. It ruins entertainers. It ruins royalty. All kinds of evil are traceable to money.

So man’s wisdom is not the answer. Neither is man’s money. What is then? Verses 11 and 12 tell us again that “God” is the answer. I know a young man who right now is going through a divorce, but he strongly refuses to listen to anything that has to do with the Lord. So what is going to happen? He is going to go deeper and deeper into trouble.

In verse 11 David is probably referring to the two parts of his own life referred to earlier: 1) When he started out, and 2) when the trial extended and he needed to trust the Lord longer and in a stronger way. He needed to remember that the power he needed was in God.

But verse 12 puts the finishing touches on the blessing. Not only is God a God of power, but He is also a God of mercy. We must never wait before we come to the Lord. His ears are open to our cries, and He delights in delivering us from our trials. It may not come immediately, but it will come.

Concl: In what way, or ways, do you need help today? Where are you looking for the help you need? May the Lord enable us to say from our hearts what David wrote in verses 1 and 2, and then what he repeated in verses 5 through 7.