

The Lord's Merciful Look Upon His People

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the Lord's merciful look upon his people, who are chosen by God's sovereign and efficacious work, and are taught and brought to love God through the convicting work of the Spirit.

Scripture: Romans 8:7

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the deep longing for God's mercy and favor, as expressed in Psalms 119:132. He emphasizes the importance of having a heart that loves God's name, acknowledging the need for a mighty transformation by God's Spirit to love Him. Philpot delves into the necessity of experiencing convictions of sin and the tender affection, pity, and power with which God looks upon His people. He highlights the continuous need for God's mercy in the life of a believer, urging sincere prayers for God's special manifestations of mercy and favor.

Transcript

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"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name" Psalm 119:132.

Most of us, who have ever felt the Word of God precious, have our favorite portions of Scripture. Those will be prime favorites which the Lord has specially opened up, or blessed to our soul; but there will be other portions of God's Word which may not, perhaps, have been in any especial manner made a blessing to us, yet such a sweet light has been cast by the blessed Spirit from time to time upon them, or we have seen and felt such beauty and glory in them, that when we open our Bible we almost instinctively turn to them. Psalm 119 has almost become in this way one of my favorite portions of Scripture. If I had the experience of that Psalm fully brought into my soul and carried out in my life, there would be no better Christian

for 60 miles around. I repeat it, if I had the experience contained in Psalm 119 thoroughly wrought into my heart by the power of the blessed Spirit, and evidenced by my walk, conduct, and conversation, I need envy no Christian that walks upon the earth for conformity to God's will and Word, inwardly and outwardly. What simplicity and godly sincerity run through the whole Psalm! What tender affection towards the Lord! What breathings of the heart into his ears! What desire to live to his honor and glory! What a divine longing

that the life, and conduct, and conversation, the inward and the outward man, might all be conformed to the revealed will and Word of God!

"Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name." Three features strike my mind, as especially apparent in the words before me: I. That God has a people who love his name. II. That the Lord looks upon them, and is merciful unto them III. The breathing of the Psalmist's heart, that God would look upon him, and be merciful unto him, in the same way he looks upon and is merciful unto them.

I. The Lord has a people who love his name. But where are these people to be found? In a state of nature, as they came into this world? No; no man by nature ever loved God, for "the carnal mind (which is all that man has or is, as the fallen child of a fallen parent,) is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom.8:7) We are all by nature the "children of wrath, even as others" (Eph.2:3); and are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph.4:18). There is a veil of ignorance and unbelief, by nature, over man's mind, so that he can neither see nor know the only true God and Jesus Christ "whom he has sent." (2 Cor.3:15; Jno.17:3). Thus, no man ever did, or ever could love the Lord's name, or the Lord himself, so long as he continues in that state of nature's darkness and nature's death. A mighty revolution must, therefore, take place in a man's bosom before he can be one of those who love the Lord's name, a change not to be effected by nature in its best and brightest form, nor to be brought about by any industry or exertion of the creature, but begun, carried on, and completed by the alone sovereign and efficacious work of God the Spirit upon the heart. This is the express testimony of God: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jno.1:11- 13).

But it may be asked, why should these highly favored people experience this new, this miraculous creation? The only answer that can be given to this question is, that the Lord loved them from all eternity. Why he fixed his love upon them to the exclusion of others, God has not informed us. Eternity itself, perhaps, may never be able to unfold to the mind of a finite being like man, why the infinite God loved some and rejected others; but to all the cavilings and proud reasonings of man, our sole reply must be, "No but, O man, who are you that reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom.9:20,21). The Lord, then, having loved the people with an everlasting love, it is necessary, in order that they may enjoy this love, and be satisfied with some streams of the river that makes glad the city of God; that they should be taught and brought to love God, or how can they delight themselves in him, whose name and nature is love?

But are the first dealings and teachings of the Spirit of God upon the heart usually such as will bring a man to love God? No! A man has a great deal to unlearn before he can learn this. He has to be brought out of the world, to be weaned from creature-righteousness; to have all his old fleshly religion broken to pieces, and scattered to the four winds of heaven, before the pure love of God can come down, and be shed abroad in his soul. It is for this reason the Lord cuts his people up with convictions. This is frequently done by the ministry of the Word; as, in the day of Pentecost, Peter's hearers were many of them pierced in their heart; and the ministers are compared in the Word to fishers and hunters: "Behold, I will send for many fishers, says the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks" (Jer.16:16).

The fishers with their sharp hooks draw them out of the water, and the hunters with their pointed spears drive them out of the holes in which they sheltered themselves. These convictions of sin, causing guilt to lie hard and heavy upon the conscience, accompanied for the most part by a discovery of our fallen state, and a manifestation of the evils of our hearts spring from a believing view of the holiness of God, a sense of the breadth and spirituality of his law, a discovery of his eternal and inflexible justice. A measure, therefore, of these convictions it is necessary to feel, such a measure, at least, as shall drive the soul out of its deceptive hiding places, what the Scripture calls "refuges of lies," in order that it may be brought to embrace the rock for lack of a shelter.

How beautifully and clearly this is set forth in Isa.28:16, where the Lord tells us, that he "will lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste." But, in order to show how his people are brought to have a standing upon this "tried stone," this "precious corner stone," this "sure foundation," the Holy Spirit adds, "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. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it" (verses 17,18). This laying of judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, is connected, you will observe, with the foundation which God has laid in Zion; thus evidencing that before the sinner can be brought to stand experimentally in his conscience upon this foundation, this only foundation "which God has laid in Zion," judgment must be laid to the line in his heart, and righteousness to the plummet in his soul's experience; the hail must sweep away every refuge of lies, and the waters of God's wrath overflow every hiding-place, in order to disannul the covenant which he has made with death, and break to pieces the agreement he has entered into with hell.

Thus, in order to bring the people of God to know him as the God of love, it is, in the very nature of things, absolutely necessary that they should pass through convictions of sin, should feel a guilty conscience, and have a discovery of the evils of their hearts, to bring them out of those lying refuges in which every man by nature seeks to entrench himself. Their depth and duration God has not defined, nor need we. Yet this we may safely declare, that they must be sufficient to produce the end that God has in view. But it is not the Lord's purpose, when he has sufficiently brought his people out of their lying refuges, to be always wounding and lacerating their consciences with convictions. He, therefore, after a time, brings into their heart a measure of that love of Christ which passes knowledge, and this teaches and enables them to love his name.

But what do we understand by the expression, "the name of God?" It is one which occurs very frequently in the Scriptures of truth. By "the name of God" I believe, then, we are to understand all that God has revealed concerning himself, but more particularly the manifestation of his grace and glory in the Person of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as the blessed Spirit casts some light upon the character of God in Christ as revealed in Scripture, and brings a sense of this with divine savor, unction, and power into the soul, the "name of God" becomes spiritually made known to the heart; and as the Lord the Spirit, from time to time, opens up all those treasures of truth, mercy, and grace, which are hidden in Christ, and raises up faith to believe and lay hold of them, he sheds abroad in the heart a sacred love to the name and character of God, as thus revealed in the Word of truth.

David saw that there was such a people. The Lord had given him what he gives to all his family, eyes, discerning eyes, whereby he saw that the Lord had a people that loved his name; that amid the ungodly generation among whom his lot was cast, there was a scattered people, in whom God had shed abroad

his love, to whom he manifested mercy, and into whose hearts he had dropped a sense of that loving-kindness of his which is better than life itself. David looked upon them; and as he looked upon them, he saw what a blessed people they were. He viewed them surrounded by all the perfections of God. He saw them kept as the apple of God's eye. He viewed them as the excellent of the earth, in whom was all his delight, and his very heart flowed out in tender affection unto them, as being beloved of God, and, in return, loving him who had shed abroad his love in their souls.

Very many of the Lord's people are here. Their eyes are enlightened to see that God has a people. Of that they have not the slightest doubt; and not only so, but their hearts' affections are secretly and sacredly wrought upon, to feel the flowing forth of tender affection to this people. They count them the excellent of the earth. They love them because they see the mind, and likeness, and image of Christ in them, however poor, however abject, however contemptible in the eyes of the world. There is a secret love that the people of God have towards one another, which binds them in the strongest cords of spiritual union and affection. David then saw that God dealt with this people in a peculiar way, and therefore cried out, "Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name." He saw that the Lord dealt in a special manner with this people, that they were the favored objects of his eternal love; and as being such, the Lord was continually and perpetually blessing them.

II. The Lord LOOKS upon His people, and is MERCIFUL unto them. There were two things which David specially saw that God bestowed upon this people; one was God's look, and the other, the manifestation of God's mercy: "Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name."

1. But how does God LOOK upon his people? Does not the Lord see all things? Are not his eyes running to and fro through the earth, to see the evil and the good. And are not all secrets open before his heart searching eyes? Do not his eyelids try the children of men? They do! But still there is a favored people that the Lord looks upon in a peculiar way, in a way in which David desired the Lord to look upon him.

1. He looks upon them in Christ. He does not look upon them as standing in self. If he looked upon them as they stand in self, his anger, wrath, and indignation must blaze out against them. But he views them as having an eternal and vital union with the Son of his love; as the apostle says, "Complete in him." (Col.2:10) And viewing them as having an eternal standing in Christ, viewing them as bought with atoning blood, and washed in the fountain which was opened in one day for all sin and for all uncleanness, as clothed in his glorious righteousness, and loved with dying love, he looks upon them not as they are in themselves, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; but he looks upon them as without spot, without blemish, in the Son of his love; as the apostle expresses it in few words, "Accepted in the Beloved." (Eph.1:6) David saw what a blessed state this was to be in; that when the Lord looked upon his people, he did not look upon them as poor, guilty, miserable sinners, but looked upon them as having that standing in Christ, that union to Christ, that interest in Christ, whereby he could look upon them with acceptance in his dear Son.

2. But this is not the only way in which God looks upon his people. He looks upon them with affection and love. Thus, when he looks upon his people, he looks upon them with all that love and affection that ever dwells in the bosom of the Three-One God, and is perpetually flowing forth to the objects of his love, choice, and mercy. We know something of this naturally. Does not the fond wife look sometimes upon her husband with eyes of tender affection? Does not the mother sometimes look upon her infant, lying in the cradle or sleeping in her lap, with eyes of tender love? Wherever there is love in our hearts, our eyes at times rest upon the objects of our affections. So it is with the Three-One God. There is that love in the

bosom of God towards the objects of his eternal favor, that when he looks down upon them from the heights of his sanctuary, he looks upon them with the tenderest affection. As we read, "He rests in his love;" (cf. Zeph.3:17) and again, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isa.62:5).

3. But besides this, he looks upon them in pity. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Psalm.103:13,14). Just as when, after the flood, he looked down from the height of his sanctuary upon Noah, and those with him in the ark, and his heart went forth in tender pity, so, from the heights of his sanctuary, he looks down upon all poor, laboring, struggling pilgrims here below, and views them with an eye of pity and compassion, out of his merciful and compassionate heart. I was bringing forward just now the figure of a mother loving her children, or a wife loving her husband. But let a sickness fall upon the husband, let some affliction befall the child, and then, there is not merely a look of love as before, but a look of pity and compassion also. And if a wife could remove her husband's illness, or a mother cure the child's ailment, how pity and love would each flow forth to remove that which causes pity to be felt.

In the same way spiritually. The God of heaven looks down upon his poor, tried family. Some he sees buffeted with sore temptations; others he sees plagued with an evil heart of unbelief; others he sees afflicted in circumstances; others wading amid deep temporal and providential trials; others mourning his absence; others persecuted, cast out by men. Each heart knows its own bitterness, each has a tender spot that the eye of the Lord sees; and the Lord, as a God of grace, looks down upon them and pities them. When he sees them entangled in a snare, he pities them as being so entangled; when he sees them drawn aside by the idolatry and evil of their fallen nature, he pities them as wandering; when he views them assaulted and harassed by Satan, he looks upon them with compassion under his attacks.

4. Besides that, he looks down upon them in power, with a determination to render them help. Reverting a moment to the figure I have used before, a mother looking upon her sickly child, there was pity painted upon her features, compassion beamed from her eye. Could she help, as well as pity, would she hesitate to do so? But the Lord has not only a mother's pity and a wife's love, for he himself challenges the comparison; he says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you" (Isa.49:15); but [he has] power for his family. He has almighty power to relieve his poor suffering children, toiling and struggling through this vast howling wilderness; for "help is laid upon One that is mighty;" (cf. Psalm.89:19) who is "able to save unto the uttermost" (Heb.7:25).

2. But, besides this, he is MERCIFUL unto them: "Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name." David saw how merciful the Lord was to those who needed mercy. They were guilty criminals; they were fallen creatures; they were sinning continually against the God of all their mercies. And, therefore, they needed mercy. And that not once, when the Lord was first pleased to pardon their sins and deliver their souls. They need mercy not once, nor twice, but they need mercy every day that they live, every hour that they breathe upon earth; as Deer sweetly expresses it: "Begging mercy every hour"

David, then, saw the Lord was merciful to his people. He knew that upon the footing of righteousness alone, none could be saved; he knew by painful experience what hearts they carried in their bosoms; he knew what temptations beset their path; he knew what snares Satan was laying for their feet; he knew their weakness, and he knew their wickedness; yet he saw how merciful the Lord was to them; how he

bore with their manners in the wilderness; how he "multiplied pardons" as the Scripture expresses it; how he forgave their iniquities; how he blotted out their sins; how he showed mercy and compassion upon those who were by nature the vilest of the vile.

He saw there was that in their hearts which justly provoked God's condemnation. But then he saw mercy in the bosom of the Redeemer more than proportionate. He saw their hearts were full of evil, full of wickedness, full of unbelief, full of everything that God hates; yet he saw how the mercy of God abounded, how his grace super-abounded over all their sins. He saw how the mercy of God was from everlasting to everlasting. As the cloud sometimes covers the face of the earth, so he saw the Lord covering all the iniquities, transgressions, and backslidings of those who love his name.

III. The breathing of the Psalmist's heart, that God would look upon HIM, and be merciful unto him, in the same way he looks upon and is merciful unto them. I believe I may honestly say, thousands of times have these words gone out of my lips, "Look upon me." Rarely do I bend my knee in prayer before the Lord of hosts without the words, "Look upon me." How expressive it is! As though the desire of the soul was that the Lord would not pass him by; would not consider him unworthy of his notice; and would not banish him as from his presence, but would cast an eye of pity, love, and compassion upon him.

1. But mingling with this desire, that the Lord would "LOOK upon him" was a distinct feeling of his helplessness, sinfulness, and unworthiness. It is as though David was lying at the footstool of mercy clothed with humility, sensible of his sins, feeling the inward vileness of his heart, and judging himself unworthy of the least smile of God's countenance, or the least whisper, of God's love. But still he could not but see that the Lord had a people who loved his name; no, he himself felt a measure of this same love. He might not have the full assurance of it. His heart might be desolate and afflicted. Doubts and fears worked in his mind; but still, amid it all, he felt the tender goings forth of affection to the name of the Lord, which was precious to his soul; he felt nearness of access unto his sacred presence; and there was that in his heart which was melted down into love and tenderness at the very name of the Lord. "Because your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love you." (Song of Sol.1:6)

But mingled with this tender affection, blended with this secret and sacred love to the name of the Lord, was a deep sense of his own worthlessness. And these two feelings always go together. Far from my heart, and far from yours who desire to fear God's name, be that bold presumptuous confidence that claims God's mercies, unmingled, with any movement of godly fear in a sinner's bosom, unmingled with a sense of worthlessness, weakness, and wickedness, that ever lives in a regenerated breast. No; wherever there is any true love to the name of the Lord, wherever there is any breathing of affection after the name of Jesus, depend upon it there always will be mixed with it the deepest sense of our own worthlessness. David could not but feel that there was love in his heart toward the Lord's name. David could not but feel there was a people that, like himself, loved that name. David could not but see that the Lord looked upon that people with an eye of love and pity. David could not but see that the Lord was specially and peculiarly merciful unto them. He himself experienced these tender sensations of love in his bosom. He was deeply penetrated; he was inwardly possessed with a sense of his own worthlessness; but he dare not intrude. He stood at a distance, and could not go boldly and presumptuously forward. He drew back, as being one of the most worthless of those who sighed after the Lord's manifested favors. Thus, the very expression, "Look upon me," not merely implies that David had a love to the name of the Lord, but also, mingled with it, a sense of his own undeservedness that the Lord should bestow upon him one single blessing.

2. Again, "Look upon me" implies that his soul was in that state and case which specially needed a look from the Lord. If your heart is hard, you need but one look from the Lord to dissolve it. Was it not so with Peter? When Peter had sinned so grievously, when he had denied his Lord and Master, do we not read that Jesus turned and looked upon him? What was the effect? The stony heart gave way; the obduracy of his mind was melted; and we read, "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62) We often feel a sense of our obduracy and impenitence; but, if the Lord does but look upon us, he can melt them away in a moment. There is also a sense of our vileness, our sinfulness, our wickedness; a feeling of this nature: "O that the Lord would but look upon me, though I am so utterly undeserving of the least notice, or least favor from his hands. O that he would cast an eye of pity and compassion upon me, for I cannot do without him."

3. It also implies that the soul desires some special, personal manifestation of God's mercy and favor. David could not be satisfied with hearing about God's mercy, nor reading about God's mercy, nor knowing there was a people to whom the Lord did show mercy. He desired that the Lord would look upon him, visit him, bless him, and manifest himself to him, come down into his heart, visit his soul, bless him with sweet manifestations of his dying love. And is not this the language of the brokenhearted sinner at the footstool of mercy? Does not this express simply the feeling that he has at the throne of grace? "Look upon me;" here I lie at your feet, all helplessness, all weakness, all wretchedness, all inability. I deserve not the least smile from your countenance; I deserve not the least whisper from your mouth; I deserve to be trampled under your feet into everlasting perdition. Yet, Lord, I cannot do without you. "Look upon me." Give me one look of mercy; give me one look of love; give me one look to bring into my soul that which my heart longs to feel.

To see, it may be at a distance, but still to see, the people that the Lord looked upon with such peculiar looks of pity, compassion, and love, he could not but covet a measure of the same blessing; and his heart burned within him that the Lord would bestow on him similar favors.

Has this ever been the experience of your soul? What do you pray to God for? I suppose many of you fall upon your knees before the footstool of mercy. What do you pray to God for? Is it for some special blessing to your soul? Is it for some manifestation of Jesus to your heart? Is it that the Lord himself would look down upon a guilty worm, and speak to your soul in the soft whispers of his mercy and his love? These are true prayers, these are spiritual breathings; this is the intercession of the Spirit in the sinner's bosom with groanings which cannot be uttered. Do you know what it is in soul experience thus to lie in humility, in simplicity, in sincerity, in brokenness of heart, in contrition of spirit, before the footstool of mercy, crying, "Look upon me."? "Me," who am utterly unworthy of your mercy. "Me," who have continually backslidden from you. "Me," who am the vilest of the vile, and the guiltiest of the guilty, yet, "Look upon me;" for I cannot bear that you should pass me by unnoticed, that you should not look upon my soul, as you look upon your children. This is a cry which, most surely will be answered.

"And be MERCIFUL unto me." When shall you and I get beyond the reach of mercy? Shall we ever get beyond feeling a desire after it as long as we breathe here below? God keep us, who desire to fear his name, from ever living a single day without breathing, more or less, after the sensible manifestation of mercy. "But," say you, "you have had mercy; what do you want it for again? Will it not do once in your life?" The man that makes that speech knows nothing of his own heart, knows nothing of the manifested mercy of God to a sinner's soul. As sins abound, as guilt is felt, as corruption works, as the conscience is burdened, as the iniquities of the heart are laid bare, as our hearts are opened up in the Spirit's light, do we not feel our need of mercy continually? Mercy for every adulterous look; mercy for every covetous thought; mercy for every light and trifling word; mercy for every wicked movement of our depraved hearts;

mercy while we live; and mercy when we die; mercy to accompany us every moment, to go with us down to the portals of the grave, to carry us safely through the swellings of Jordan, and to land us safe before the Redeemer's throne? "Be merciful unto me" Why me? Because I am so vile a sinner; so base a backslider; such a daring transgressor; because I sin against you with every breath that I draw; because the evils of my heart are perpetually manifesting themselves; because nothing but your mercy can blot out such iniquities as I feel working in my carnal mind. David saw that this mercy was peculiar mercy. He says, "Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you used do unto those who love your name." He knew it was not common mercy that the Lord bestowed upon those that love his name; but inexhaustible mercy, everlasting mercy, super abounding mercy. For he knew that nothing but such mercy as this could suit such guilty sinners as those who love the Lord's name.

David was too well instructed in the mysteries of his sinful nature to expect that that nature would ever be anything but vile. David knew too much of the weakness and wickedness of his heart to dream for a single moment of perfection in the flesh. David never expected to be in a spot where the mercy of God should not be needed every hour. But he saw the people of God were dealt with in a different way from other men. He saw that they were of that blessed generation upon whom the dew of heaven fell, and his heart longed after a measure of that dew to fall upon his soul.

Has not that been the case with you sometimes? You have gone among God's people; your heart has been oppressed, cold, and dead; but you have gone and conversed with some of God's saints; you have seen grace shine in them, and your heart has been sweetly warmed in your bosom; you have felt your soul melted and dissolved under the unction and grace of their words; and you have longed to experience some of the things that they have been speaking of, and that the same power and dew that rested upon them might rest upon you. Well, you have said nothing, but have gone away, hastened away before the time, put on your hat, or your bonnet, and gone away. But when you got away, O what a going up of your soul towards the Lord, "O that you would be pleased to look upon me! That you would give me some sweet manifestation; that you would grant me a blessing that will satisfy my heart!" So that, seeing grace shining in the person with whom you were conversing, there was a communication of life and feeling whereby you longed after a similar manifestation of mercy and love to your heart; after the same divine dew and blessed unction to water your soul.

It is something like, in nature, two farms or gardens, upon one of which the rain has fallen plenteously, while the other is dry and parched. The owner of the latter, while he looks only on his own ground, thinks it may do. But let him go a little distance from home, and see a farm richly watered with the rain of heaven, and covered with verdure; when he returns to his own patch, and sees no such crop there, does he not long for the same fertilizing rain to fall upon his land? So spiritually. If you go among the people of God, and see grace shining in them; the image of Christ in them; the blessed Spirit carrying on his work in them; their souls clothed with beauty and verdure, while you are cold, dead, and dry; does not your soul long to experience some of the same blessings, and be watered with the same dew and rain that have fallen upon their hearts? When the soul is here, we can say, "Look upon me, and be merciful upon me, as you did to those who love your name." "Lord, give my soul a portion of that blessing which springs from the operations of your Spirit in the hearts of your children." When the child of God sees clearly the operations of the Spirit in the bosom of another, his own heart longs after a measure of that same power to rest upon him, that the same fruit of the Spirit may be brought forth in his heart, in his lips, and in his life.

Sweet spot to be in! Safe spot to be acquainted with! Far better than that vain confidence and presumptuous assurance which many make their boast of, who never doubt, or fear; always see their

interest, and claim God's covenant mercies; can say, "My Father, My Jesus," with unwavering breath, while, perhaps, they have been wallowing, half an hour before, in all manner of uncleanness; while their hearts are as covetous as the devil can make them, and their hands polluted with everything that this world can soil them with. God's people cannot walk in this path. They cannot get upon these mountains, where there is neither dew nor rain. This is their spot, when they are in their right mind, to lie at the footstool of mercy, waiting upon God to shine away their fears whether they shall ever get to heaven; to have low thoughts of themselves, as the vilest of the vile, and the weakest of the weak; to put in no claim, but simply breathe forth their desires to the Lord, that he would show mercy, favor, and kindness to them.

There may be some here who are in this spot. Perhaps they have been writing bitter things against themselves, because they cannot tower to the same height of assurance as some speak of; because they cannot sing those hymns which are sung in some chapels; because they cannot use that bold language they hear fall from the lips of others; and thus they are sometimes tried, condemned, and cut up in their feelings, as to whether they have the love of God in their souls at all. Now, if there be such a one here, can you not find some of the feelings I have been describing, some of the experience I have been endeavoring to trace out in your heart?

"Look upon me." Is not that the desire of your soul? You could not utter that prayer before the Lord quickened you. Before you can utter that prayer you must have faith to believe that the Lord does look down upon his people. You must have a desire in your heart that the Lord would specially bless and favor you. You must be weaned from all creature righteousness, creature wisdom, and creature strength, and be looking to the Lord to bless you with that blessing which makes rich. Do you not see how kind and tender the Lord is to his people? Do you not see that they are the only people on the face of the world whose lot is worth envying? Does not sometimes this petition, if not in words, at least in substance, steal out of your heart, "O that you would look upon me." Though I am a vile wretch, though I am a guilty sinner, though I am a base backslider, though I am a filthy idolater, though I deserve to be banished from your presence, though I merit to be trampled under foot, yet look upon me! It is what my soul desires, that you would bless me, that you would show me your mercy, that you would shed abroad your love in my heart, that you would speak with your own lips, and whisper into my heart, "Fear not, for you are mine."

And when you read in the Word of God, or hear from the lips of some experimental man of truth, the feelings of God's people, those whom the Lord has really blessed; when you hear of the rain and dew of heaven falling upon their souls, and the secret of the Lord resting upon their tabernacle, is there not in some of your bosoms a longing desire that the Lord would so bless you, so manifest himself unto you, that you may enjoy the very same things in your own heart, by an application of them with power to your conscience?

Now you who know something of these things in your soul may, and indeed certainly will, be despised by heady professors; you may be ridden over by them, trampled under foot, cast out as knowing nothing; but, depend upon it, you have true religion, more vital godliness in your hearts, that know some of these feelings, desires, and exercises by divine teaching, than all these high and heady professors. Yes, there is more true religion, more vital godliness in a sigh, cry, and groan, in a simple petition put up out of a laboring bosom at the foot-stool of mercy, than in the presumptuous language of all the hypocrites in the world put together. There is more of the Holy Spirit's work in the conscience of a sinner that goes burdened, exercised, tried, and distressed to the throne of grace, and there looks up to a bleeding Jesus, and longs after an application of his atoning blood to his conscience, than in all the presumptuous claims that thousands have made with presumptuous lips. Here we have it in the Word of truth, here we have

before our eyes the experience of a saint of God, drawn by the hand of the Spirit; here we have the breathings of a tender conscience, the sighings of a broken spirit, the utterance of a feeling heart.

Now, can you find yours there? Look and see whether you can find anything of the experience of the 119th Psalm in your soul. Never mind what people say about you, nor what they say against you; no, nor even what your own heart may say in your own bosom. But can you in honesty, simplicity, and godly sincerity, find David's feelings in your bosom? David's prayer in your heart? David's breathings in your breast? If so, God has made you a believer. If so, you are under divine teaching. If so, David's God is your God; and as sure as David is in glory, so surely will you be in glory too.

But as to a religion that knows nothing of these things, neither sighs, nor cries, nor breathings, nor groans, nor longings, nor languishings, nor meltings, nor softenings, that feels no contrition, no tenderness, no godly sorrow, no desire to please God, no fear to offend him, away with it! Throw it into the river! Bury it in the first ash-heap you come to! The sooner it is got rid of, the better. Religion without heavenly teaching and the Spirit's secret operations; without a conscience made tender in the fear of the Lord; without the spirit of prayer in the bosom; without breathings after the Lord; without desires to experience his love, and enjoy a sense of his mercy and goodness; all such religion is a deception and a delusion. It begins in the flesh, and it will end in the flesh. It is all that man can produce; and as the Lord says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," (1 Cor.15:50) so fleshly religion cannot. "The flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you," said the Lord, "they are spirit, and they are life." (Jno.6:63)

But if there be within these walls any who know something of these fruits in your souls, something of this experience traced out by the Spirit of God in your hearts, you are safe, though perhaps you cannot see it yourselves; you are secure, though your hearts may sometimes quake and fear. For the Lord, who has begun the work, will carry it on, and bring it to full perfection, satisfy you with a sweet discovery of his grace and love here, and eventually and eternally bless you with a weight of glory.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-lords-merciful-look-upon-his-people/>

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