

The Reproach Answered

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon explains how the Psalmist's trust in God's word gave him the ability to answer those who reproached him, and how this experience is a common one for God's people.

Scripture: Psalm 119:41, Luke 10:38, John 16:33, Romans 3:19, Ephesians 6:16, 1 John 3:20

Topics: "Gods Mercy", "Inner Peace"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the longing of the Psalmist for God's mercies and salvation to answer the reproaches he faced, highlighting the need for internal manifestations of God's grace to counter internal condemnations. Philpot emphasizes the importance of feeling reproach, acknowledging helplessness, and desiring God's salvation as evidence of a quickened soul. He explains how God's mercies and salvation internally answer the accusations of the law, our own hearts, worldly judgments, and Satan's accusations, providing a deep sense of peace and satisfaction in Christ's fullness.

Transcript

A sermon preached August 9, 1840 by J. C. Philpot, at Arlington

"Let your mercies come also unto me, O Lord; even your salvation, according to your word. So shall I have with which to answer him that reproaches me - for I trust in your word." - Psalm 119:41,42.

Unless we have a right conception of the situation in which a person is, we shall form very inadequate opinions as to the expressions which that person utters. Mere detached sentences of this nature, taken separate from their connection, will often no more enable us to understand their meaning, than to see the broken branches of a tree scattered on the ground will enable us to gather what was its majestic form and beautiful foliage in the situation which it lately occupied. So, to understand the expressions which many of God's saints have made use of in the Scriptures of truth, we must know the peculiar situation in which those saints were placed, before we can enter into the real meaning of the words which fell from their lips.

For instance, when we find Job expressing himself in this passionate language, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'There is a child conceived'; let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it;" if we did not know the peculiar circumstances in which Job was placed, Satan tempting him, God hiding his face from him, and everything without and everything within conspiring to write bitterness upon his path, we would be staggered that a gracious man should ever give vent to such unbecoming expressions. So when we find

the prophet Jeremiah exclaiming, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born - let not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed; cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A child is born unto you, making him very glad;" if we were unacquainted with the peculiar temptations under which at that time Jeremiah was laboring, we could scarcely conceive that such God-dishonoring language could ever fall from his lips. So again in the case of King Hezekiah; if we did not know that the sentence of death was written in his heart at the time, we could scarcely understand him when he cries, "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave - I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."

Now, so it is with respect to the words, from which I mean, with God's blessing, to deliver a few thoughts this morning. If we do not know the precise situation in which David was when he uttered the words, we shall form very inadequate conceptions of their meaning, and we shall be very much at a loss to gather what he intended by them. Before, therefore, I can enter upon my text, I must endeavor to show from the Psalm the peculiar situation in which the Psalmist was when these expressions fell from his lips.

He was not then in the full assurance of faith. He was not at this moment seeing his name clearly written in the book of life. He was not living under the shinings in of the Sun of righteousness; he was not "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is clear from Psalm 119:25,28,81,82,120,143,153,154,174,176, as well as from the words of the text itself. But then, on the other hand, he was not by any means on the brink of despair - he was not sinking, in the despondency of his soul, into utter blackness and darkness. He was if I may use the expression in a kind of medium state - in that average experience, which the greater part of God's people are walking in. He was not in the enjoyment of light; he was not in the depths of darkness. He was not bathing in the love of God; neither was he without a firm hope of God's mercy in his soul. For we find him saying lower down, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope." "This is my comfort in my affliction; for your word has quickened me." "Those who do not fear will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in your word." "My soul faints for your salvation, but I hope in your word." So that if you look through the expressions of this Psalm, you will find them to be those of a soul which is exercised, harassed, tried, and tempted; and yet having an abiding hope in the mercy of God; like a ship at sea, tossed with the storm, and heaved up with the waves, yet having the anchor firm down in the sand.

That he had this firm anchorage we gather from the last clause in the text - "So shall I have with which to answer him who reproaches me - for I trust in your word." But how came he to trust in God's word? Was it letter faith? Was his trust a mere notion or opinion? Was it mere moral or natural persuasion? Was it in any respect the fruit and creature of his own heart? No; his trust arose from this, that he had felt the power of God's truth in his soul; that he had experienced the life-giving effects of the promise applied to his heart; for he says, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope," that word which God had brought home to his soul; that word which had been commended with life and power and feeling to his conscience, and had raised up faith and hope with all their blessed train.

His state then was this - hanging, relying, depending upon, and trusting to that word of promise which the Holy Spirit had applied with power to his conscience; not relying upon the bare letter of truth, but leaning upon the sure word of promise which had been brought home with power to his heart. He had been quickened by it, strengthened by it, comforted by it, and encouraged by it, and was therefore now hanging upon it, as a child hangs upon its mother's breast. And mingled with this trust there was a pressing case of need; so that these three things, like the three strands of a rope, were entwined together in his heart; need

- faith - and desire.

Being, then, in this state, he only had a greater hungering and thirsting after further food. What he had already received from God had not brought into his soul lasting satisfaction; it had rather enkindled his appetite for more. Fresh needs called urgently for fresh deliverances; new diseases required anew the healing hand. This is the effect of the first word which the Holy Spirit drops with power into a man's heart. It deadens him and sickens him to all letter religion, and all creature faith, and all taking God at his word, and at the same time enkindles in his soul an appetite for, and a breathing after other testimonies, which shall come in the same way, and be let down into his heart by the same golden cord from the throne of mercy and grace above. He had just enough given to him to make him long for more; just enough to open up a ray of light into God's truth; just enough to write beggary, poverty, and bankruptcy, upon all creature attainments; just enough to anoint his eyes to see the insufficiency and inability of everything the creature could do for him; and at the same time just enough to kindle in his soul burning desires and breathing longings after increased and increasing testimonies and manifestations of God.

Now, this I may perhaps be allowed to call an average experience; the medium experience in which most of God's people walk. They are not, for the most part, sinking into despair; they are not, for the most part, rising in assurance. They have received that which has opened their eyes to the poverty of everything else; they have tasted that, which by its mysterious entrance into the soul has brought with it feeling, power, unction, dew, and sweetness. They have experienced enough to make them earnestly desire to enjoy the fullness of that of which they have received the foretaste - so that they are not cloyed by it, nor yet satisfied with it; but only fitted and prepared to receive more gracious communications out of Christ's fullness. And they are continually brought into those situations and trying straits to which alone Divine help is suitable.

Being in this state, then, the Psalmist was made dead to everything that the creature could do for him, and was brought into a waiting posture - into an earnest expectation of further good - into a longing desire to receive that which alone could satisfy him. His eyes being now opened to see what God was, and his heart having a drop of this Divine good let down into it from the fountain of all grace, his affections were inflamed and his heart wrought upon, so as to be satisfied with nothing short of fresh communications of the Divine favor.

Being in this state, then, he "longs after the mercies" of God, and he "hungers" after his "salvation." But what was the peculiar state of soul in which he was that made him hunger after these "mercies," and thirst after this "salvation?" There was something in his heart more than desire. There was a very pressing need. He was driven as well as drawn, impelled by urgent necessity as well as allured by Divine encouragements. An enemy was at hand who dogged his steps, an accuser with a heavy bill of charges was waiting at his gate. It was "that he might have with which to answer him who reproached him." Though not in despair, he yet felt daily that there was that which reproached him, and he found daily an inability to return an answer to these reproaches; and being thus struck dumb, he was wrought upon by the blessed Spirit to seek and sue unto God after his mercies, that "the coming in of mercies and the manifestation of salvation" might furnish him with the answer that he needed.

Now, none but a spiritual beggar and bankrupt could ever put up such a prayer as this. None but a tender conscience can feel reproach; and none but a soul made alive unto what God is spiritually led into the secrets which are with those that fear Him, could ever seek such an answer from God as should be a sufficient reply "to him that reproached him."

With God's blessing, then, we will look, first, at a few of those things which reproach a living soul; then at the poverty, helplessness, and inability of the creature to answer any of these reproaches; then at the desires and breathings of the soul after such a manifestation of mercy as shall afford a sufficient answer and lastly at the way in which these answers are communicated.

I. I have just now hinted that there are many accusers that reproach a living soul.

A. One of these is the law of God, which reproaches every soul to which it is spiritually applied. And what does it reproach that soul for? Disobedience to it. Every one to whom the law is applied with power is reproached, and put to shame, and brought in guilty, because he cannot fulfill the requirements of that law. Wherever the law is written upon a man's conscience, he will find a thorough inability in himself to answer its reproaches. A self-righteous pharisee can always furnish an answer. The law says, "Do, and live." His answer is boldly, "I do, and therefore I live." And why can he make this answer? Because the law in its holy requirements, in its length and breadth and height and depth, in its magnitude and spirituality, is not opened up to his heart and conscience; and, therefore, by the performance of a few duties he is easily able to answer the reproaches of the law, as long as it stands in the external letter.

But a living soul, whose eyes are open to see its inability to perform that which the law demands, and who feels these reproaches cutting it through and through with piercing and sharp convictions, is brought in utterly unable to return an answer. This is that to which the apostle points, when he says, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." That the mouth may be stopped; that is, unable to "return an answer." Here all self-justification is cut off; here all fleshly excuses are put to an end; here the soul falls down guilty before God, unable to utter a word, or bring forward a single plea why judgment should not take place; and, therefore, the living soul which is wrought upon by the application of God's holy law is so convinced of its inability to answer the law charges, of the utter imperfection of everything it performs, of the entire helplessness of every movement, of the thorough beggary and bankruptcy which are written upon it, that it falls down before God, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" instead of seeking to answer the reproach which the law brings against it.

B. Again - our own heart is continually reproaching us, according to those words of John, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." Our heart, then, often reproaches us, that is, condemns us. And what does it condemn us for? It condemns us for our shortcomings in all we desire to perform to God's glory. It condemns us for the base lusts which are continually working up from the bottom of that filthy puddle which is within us. It condemns us that we cannot live as we desire, think as we desire, pray as we desire, speak as we desire, or do anything as we desire - and thus our heart is continually casting reproaches upon us, condemning us, and bringing us in guilty.

Now, we have no answer to make - we can offer no excuse; we can bring forward no plea nor self-justification. We cannot, as many do, throw it off upon the old man, and say unto God, "Why have you made me thus? Why did you create me as I am? Why did you cause me to come into this world to add to my iniquities?" All such pleas and self-justification, and all such excuses are effectually cut off; and the soul can return no answer to the reproaches of the condemning conscience, but in its right mind falls beneath them, and cries, "Guilty! guilty!"

C. But again - professors of religion are continually casting their reproaches upon us. They treat us as Peninnah treated Hannah. Peninnah had children; Hannah had none; typical of how the mere professor of religion is abundantly fruitful in zeal and 'good works', while the living soul is barren, because it is unable

to produce anything in the strength of the flesh, and must have all its fruits wrought in it by the power of God. It, therefore, accounts nothing as fruits but those which spring from the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit - and thus, while the bondwoman has abundance of children, the real wife, the free-born spouse, the beloved Hannah, is barren, and unable to produce those fruits which she considers as such. Professors are continually casting into our teeth our lack of zeal, our carelessness about the perishing heathen, our neglect of what they call the means of grace, our not getting up a number of duties which are highly esteemed in their eyes, our not joining ourselves to a variety of associations for which the word of God gives no precept, and which the Lord himself never has enjoined. These reproaches we may despise; but there are others that they bring, to which we often find that we have no answer to make. They say, for instance, "Why don't you read the Bible more? Why don't you pray more? Why don't you bring your children up with greater attention to that which becomes godly parents? Why are you not more liberal in the cause of God? Why do you not show more by your life, conduct, and conversation, that you are what you profess to be?" These reproaches are cast in our teeth, and we often feel unable to answer them; for our own hearts condemn us, and we groan under the burden that we cannot do the things that we would.

D. Again - even the world will sometimes reproach God's people. They can often see in them a spirit of covetousness, whereas they profess to have their hearts and affections set on things above. They often observe in them a spirit of worldliness, when they profess that their kingdom is not of this world. They often perceive in them a slanderous tongue, when they profess to have the mind of Christ, and to walk in love as he walked. They often discern in them resentment of injuries, when they profess to be meek, and to be followers of Him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. They often see in them a levity, frivolity, and carelessness, when they profess to have their hearts drawn up from the things of time and sense, and their minds engaged in spiritual things.

E. Well, these reproaches are often cast in their teeth, and they have no answer to make to them, because their conscience brings them in guilty. Where the conscience is not wrought upon by the Spirit so as to have life in it, it can make excuses, and can retort angry word for angry word. But where the conscience is quickened into spiritual life and feeling, and is made tender, it sooner or later falls beneath the accusation; it pleads guilty to the charge; it is unable to lift up its head, and says, I confess that I am guilty of the things which are brought against me.

As I observed before, this experience has been wrought in the conscience, that is - the utter inability of the creature to return an answer. Our helplessness and miserable impotency are so deeply engraved upon the table of our hearts, that we are unable to say a word in self-defense, or reply boldly.

F. Again - Satan often reproaches the children of God. In Re 12:10, he is therefore called "the accuser of the brethren." We know how he reproached Job, and even accused him unto God when he said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" As though Job was a mercenary character, as if he had a religion which only lived and prospered as long as worldly things flourished with him, and that if God only put forth his hand, he would curse him to his face. Thus Satan is continually reproaching the children of God; and, like a base wretch as he is, he will be perpetually seducing God's people by the pleasing baits and allurements which he presents before their eyes into some forbidden lust, or unhallowed gratification; and then, when he has entangled them fast in his snare, he will turn round upon them, and become their accuser.

No more; this base devil will continually inject his own infernal thoughts into our hearts, and then turn round upon us, and reproach us as if they were ours. He will stir up the infidelity of our carnal mind; he will

inject blasphemous thoughts; he will present before our eyes horrible pictures; he will breathe into our hearts most abominable imaginations; and when he has insinuated these hellish feelings into our depraved nature, he will come in another form, and reproach us with them as though they spontaneously arose from our own hearts, and then will say, "There is no hope for you; a child of God never had such feelings as these; if you were a living soul, you never could have such workings in your heart." Thus he turns round on the soul, and tries to sink it into despair by making it feel guilty of the very things that he himself has injected.

Now a living soul wants to return an answer to him that reproaches it. But he cannot do it of himself, for he has not a word to speak in self-justification; that is utterly cut off; and therefore he wants to have that which shall furnish him with an answer to these reproaches. And what alone can furnish him with an answer?

The mercies of God in his soul. "Let your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even your salvation, according to your word; so shall I have with which to answer him that reproaches me." The coming in of "mercies" into the soul, and the manifestation of "salvation" to the heart afford an answer "to him that reproaches us." If you will observe, the word "mercies" is in the plural number, there being many mercies; but "salvation" is in the singular number, there being only one salvation. In what way, then, did he need these "mercies?" Merely as standing in the letter of the word? Only as recorded in the inspired word of truth? - as things to look at - as objects hung up, as it were, in a picture, merely for the eye to gaze upon? No; he needed them in his heart, "to come to him," to visit him, to be breathed into him, to be made part and parcel of him, to be the life-blood that should circulate in his veins, to be the very kingdom of God set up with power in his soul. And why did he need internal mercies? Because he had internal reproaches. Why did he need mercies in his soul? because condemnation was in his soul. It was there the sentence of death was written; it was there the sentence of acquittal was to be recorded. It was there that reproach was felt; it was there the answer to the reproach was to be given. If the reproach were merely outward, the answer might be outward also; but the reproof being inward - in the heart, in the conscience, in the feelings - it was needed that the answer should be in the same place, written in the same spot, engraved in the same tablets, and brought home with the same or far greater power, so as to be a sufficient answer to the reproaches of him that reproached him.

Well, here is the law then, which brings its cutting reproaches against a man, and that in a man's conscience, accusing him, and bringing him in guilty. Where shall he find an answer to this? Can he bring forward his good works? No; the sentence of the law is within, and good works, could he perform them, are merely external thing. Can he bring forward resolutions, and promises, and vows to do better for the future? No; these promises, resolutions, and vows spring from the flesh, but condemnation is written in his spirit. Shall he answer these reproaches by his own prayers? No; for the condemnation of the law is written in his spiritual conscience, and only as far as prayer is indited by the Spirit, will it go up out of a spiritual heart. The malady, therefore, being so deep, the remedy must be deeper still; the condemnation being so poignant and internal, the answer to condemnation must be carried deeper still, into the secret recesses of the soul, that it may meet it in its very spot, that it may come into the very place, that it may encounter it at the very fountain head, and answer it in the very court where it is speaking against him so that the way in which the soul is brought to want internal mercies, and an internal voice speaking in power the inward whisper of love, and the inward testimony of God that we are his, is by the deep feeling of inward condemnation.

If I have a mere external wound, an external plaster will cure it; but what if I have an internal disease preying on my vitals? Then I must have an internal remedy. So, if I have an internal condemnation, I must

have an internal acquittal - if I have internal guilt I must have internal pardon; if I have internal damnation, I must have internal salvation - and if I have an internal devil whispering his internal accusations, I must have an internal Christ to answer this internal devil. So that none but the man who has these internal reproaches, and this internal condemnation, will ever want to have internal manifestations and internal testimonies. All others have the scratch of the finger which a little sticking plaster will cure; but really sin-sick souls, who have the disease preying upon their vitals, must have the blood and love of Jesus applied to the same place, and coming in to the very same spot.

II. As I remarked before, the word "mercies" is in the plural number; and I shall now endeavor to show how the different mercies of God answer the different accusations.

When the law speaks guilt, mercy coming into the heart answers that reproach - for mercy flows through the atoning blood of the Savior; mercy comes through the channel of Christ's glorious righteousness, which was a satisfaction paid to the law - and therefore when the law says, "guilty," mercy, speaking with the voice of atoning blood- mercy, using the language of imputed righteousness, answers that reproach and says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." Does the law then condemn? Christ has fulfilled the law? Does the law speak wrath? The blood of Jesus speaks better things than the blood of Abel; for "by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified." So that mercy testifying in the soul of the atoning blood of Jesus and speaking of his glorious righteousness furnishes the inward answer to the inward reproach.

Again, our own heart condemns us, for our shortcomings, our imperfections, our frailties, our numerous backslidings, our continual spiritual idolatries. Now when mercy comes into the soul, it covers, overflows, superabounds over all these frailties, imperfections, backslidings, and shortcomings. And thus mercy entering into the soul answers the reproaches. Do I come short? I do. Am I inwardly reproached for my shortcomings? I am - but is there any shortcoming in God's mercy?

Am I reproached for backsliding? I am, daily and hourly - but is backsliding beyond the reach of Jesus' blood? Is backsliding beyond the outstretched arm of his mercy? Is the guilt of backsliding so great that atoning blood has no power to redeem or heal? So that when atoning blood comes into a man's conscience, it answers the reproach, "You are a backslider." I confess it; I acknowledge it; I feel it; I mourn over it; but is it beyond the power of Jesus' blood to put it away? So that when the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon a man's conscience, it opens its mouth for the dumb in the cause of him that is appointed to destruction; it pleads the cause of the poor and needy, and answers the charge, not by denying it, but by bringing in a sentence of acquittal.

When the soul, then, is reproached by internal condemnation, it does not escape the charge by pleading innocency, but by pleading guilty; and then the surety coming in to plead his atoning blood, the internal reproach is internally answered, and internal condemnation is taken off - not by saying, "We have not done the thing," but by owning it and confessing it, and feeling in our heart that "where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound."

So again, professors cast their reproaches on us for our barrenness, our slothfulness, our worldliness, and the many things which tarnish our life and conduct in their eyes. We need an answer to their reproaches. And what answer! Sometimes the answer of a good conscience towards God, when innocent of their unjust accusations. At other times, God makes our conscience tender to own the charge, and avoid these things for the future. When he plants his fear in the heart, to be "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares

of death" - this is a mercy. When he raises up in our soul a sense of weakness and helplessness, and at the same time a piteous cry to hold us up that we would not fall; and in answer to this piteous cry strengthens our souls, so that we "stand in the evil day, and having done all, stand" - then this mercy is an answer to him that reproaches us.

So when Satan comes in with his accusations; when he tempts us, for instance, to believe that we are hypocrites, and a sweet spirit of sincerity is breathed into our hearts, it is a mercy that comes into the soul; and coming in as a mercy into the soul, it is an answer to this charge of hypocrisy. When Satan injects his hellish suggestions against the work, person, blood, and love of Jesus; when the conscience is made tender to hate these fiery darts, when the mind shrinks from them with holy horror, when the very spirit trembles, and the soul cries unto God to be delivered from such dreadful imaginations, it is a mercy; and this mercy is an answer to him who reproaches us, our hatred to them showing that they are not ours. When Satan says there is no hope for us; when God drops his own blessed word into the soul, it is an answer to this reproach by communicating hope. When Satan tells us we are deluded and deceived; and a desire to be delivered from all deceit and a solemn dread of all delusion are implanted in the heart, it is an answer to this reproach.

Thus as the world, our own hearts, professors, and Satan, all bring in these internal reproaches, and the soul is unable to answer them in its own wisdom and strength, and is brought to sigh and cry unto God that his "mercies" may come into the heart; when his "mercies," in answer to that prayer, do come into the heart, they are a sufficient answer to these internal reproaches and condemnations.

III. But again - the Psalmist not merely wanted to have "mercies" come unto him, but he wanted "salvation" - "even your SALVATION according to your word." It was internal salvation that his soul was longing after, the experience of it, the enjoyment of it, the sweet pledge and foretaste of it; and he wanted to have this in his heart, lodged deep and safe in his conscience. Now, this is the grand answer to him who reproaches us, to have the testimony of salvation in the soul. If the law reproaches, salvation in the heart is an answer to its reproach. If our own heart condemns us, to have a sense of God's salvation in the soul is an answer to every reproach that the heart can bring. If the world condemns us, casts out our names as evil, imputes to us practices which we abhor, tarnishes our fair fame, and throws upon us every base imputation, if we have salvation in our hearts, it is a sufficient answer to all the reproaches that are cast upon us. If professors say how slothful we are, how lazy we are, how little we care for the means of grace, how little we trouble ourselves about the perishing heathen, and so on; if we have salvation in our hearts, written there by the finger of God, it is an answer to these reproaches. What need we do for ourselves when Christ has done all? Why need we be busy, anxious, and restless, when He has finished the work which his Father gave him to do?

The strength of the child of God is to sit still - "stand still, and see the salvation of God"; to have no will, no power, no wisdom, no strength; to be a beggar and a bankrupt, and live upon daily alms; to be a dependant upon Jesus to supply him every day and every hour - this is the state of a happy, blessed child of God. Now, if he can have the enjoyment of this in his soul, if he can have the sweet manifestation of this in his heart, why need he care for the reproaches of those who reproach him? Is he lazy who does nothing but simply receive out of Christ's fullness? Let them term it laziness; but is the vessel lazy that merely receives as it is filled out of the fountain? Is the child lazy that lies reclining upon its mother's lap? Is the aged man lazy who cannot walk without support? Is the fond wife lazy who loves to recline on her husband's bosom? Is the vine or the ivy lazy because its tendrils clasp round the oak? No man calls the weakness of these objects laziness, because their very blessedness, happiness, and satisfaction is to

lean upon another.

We read of two sisters, of whom one was active, and the other, in her sister's opinion, was very lazy, one must needs bustle about the house, while her sister was sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing his word - and the busy Martha must not only condemn her sister for her laziness, but must needs involve the Savior in the same reproach, saying, "Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." She was so zealous, active, and busy, that she was not satisfied with reproaching her sister for her laziness, but must needs cast an imputation on the Savior also. But what did he say? Did he sanction her reproach? He said "Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." One thing was needful; and what was that "good part," but to sit at his feet, to hear his word, to drink in of his spirit, to gaze on his countenance, and to draw rich draughts of love out of his loving bosom? So it is with the soul that is really taught these blessed lessons - it never does so much as when it does nothing; it is never so active as when it is most passive; it is never so strong as when it is most weak - it is never so full as when it is most empty; it is never so wise as when it is most convinced of its own folly; and it is never so satisfied with Jesus as when it is most dissatisfied with itself.

Here, then, we have a striking contrast between the feelings of the living soul - and the restless, busy activity of a mere unhumbled, puffed-up professor of religion. The hardened conscience feels no reproach; it glances off from it as an arrow glanced off the armor of some ancient knight in chivalry. The law never touches him; the world never condemns him; his own heart never convicts him; he is never brought in guilty, internally guilty; because his heart is like Leviathan, of whom we read in the book of Job - "His heart is as firm as a stone; yes, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. The sword of him that lays at him cannot strike - nor the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteems iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; sling stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble - he laughs at the shaking of a spear." Such is a carnal, dead, unhumbled, conscience-seared professor; nothing touches him, nothing moves him, nothing condemns him, and nothing reproaches him.

But where the conscience has been wrought upon by Divine teaching, so as to become tender, sensitive, and quick, it feels keenly reproaches cast upon it. These reproaches being internal, it must needs have an internal answer to them; and this internal answer is when God sweetly and blessedly satisfies the soul as to its own eternal interest in the blood and love of the Lamb, fills it out of Christ's fullness, and gives it grace for grace.

But you will observe that the Psalmist was not enjoying this at the time; he was panting after it. It was indeed the longing desire of his soul, but he was not settled down in the sweet comfort of it - and yet, as I have endeavored to show you, there was that in his heart which was preparing him for it; which had opened His eyes to see the beauty of it; which had raised up a longing and panting in his soul that he might enjoy it - and therefore he adds, "Let your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even your salvation, according to your word."

What word was this? Not the bare letter of the word, though salvation always comes agreeing with the letter of the word, without money and without price, rich, glorious, unbought, and free. But the word of which he is here speaking is the word which God had applied to his soul, upon which he had caused him to hope; the first testimony which he had dropped into his heart, the first living evidence in his conscience, sealed there by a Divine witness. Now, this word which had quickened him, upon which God had caused him to hope, in which he trusted, and upon which faith was exercised and hanging, had respect to salvation, and God's salvation, not man's. "Even your salvation." He had been put then, into a waiting

posture; he had been brought into that state of emptiness, helplessness, insufficiency, and creature-nothingness, which had prepared his soul for the manifestation of this rich salvation. He wanted no half-salvation, no mixed salvation; no blended medley part of grace and part of works; but he wanted God's salvation, and God's salvation alone; for he says, "Even your salvation" - salvation designed by you, salvation accomplished by you, salvation manifested by you, salvation bearing your stamp, and carrying your impress, salvation witnessed by your own power, salvation lifting up the soul into the enjoyment of yourself.

Now, nothing else than that salvation can ever satisfy a soul which has had the word applied to it, upon which God has caused it to hope. All other salvation will never reach to the spot where condemnation is. Everything external here falls; everything outward is here at fault. God's salvation, ratified by God's power, attested by God's Spirit, and brought home to the soul by God's own operation, is the only salvation that can give an answer to him that reproaches us; and this will always flow in sweet accordance with the word of promise upon which God has caused the soul to hope; it will always flow in sweet union with that word which has dropped into the heart, and by dropping into the heart has communicated life, light, and feeling.

If you are a living soul, you will know some of these workings. Is there a day in your life that you escape reproach? Do you escape it from the world? If you do, it is because you are of the world. Do you escape it from your own heart? If you do, it is because your heart is like a piece of the nether millstone. Do you escape it from professors? If you do, it is because you are one with them. Do you escape it from the devil? If you do, it is because you are a subject of his kingdom. But if you are brought out of the world, out of the professing Church, out of the kingdom of Satan, and set down into the kingdom of God, you will have all these inward reproaches working death and condemnation in your soul; and you will be so convicted of your own helplessness, inability, and impotency to answer any one of these charges that the longing cry and panting desire of your heart will be, that the mercies of God should come into your heart, and the salvation of God visit your soul; that by them, and them only, you might have with which to answer those who reproach you.

But you may be very weak in the Divine life, very tried and exercised in your minds, very full of doubts and fears in your souls; and yet here is the door by which you can come in. I am not going to open the door wider; it is as wide open as it can be to let in every quickened soul. Every quickened soul knows these three things - internal reproach - "For your sake I have suffered reproach;" helplessness and inability to answer these reproaches; and a longing desire that God, by the manifestation of his salvation, would plead our cause, bring us to the light of his countenance, and overcome our enemies by giving us an answer of peace and love in our soul. Now, every living soul can come in with these three evidences - reproach, helplessness, and longing desire after God's salvation. Is not this a low standard? Well, if you can come in here, there is reason to believe that God the Holy Spirit has put these evidences into your heart. And these will be no half-hearted evidences; they will not be perpetual, I grant, but they will be at times kindled most fervently in your soul. And the more reproach comes in, the more you will need reproach answered; the more you feel condemnation, the more you will need salvation; and the more you feel your own helplessness, the more you will want God to manifest his strength in your weakness, and give that answer to these accusations which you are unable to give yourselves.

I leave these remarks in God's hands - and if you have an internal testimony that you have experienced these things in your souls, may it be His blessed will to seal home these words with power upon your heart, that you may have all the comfort, and then you will render to God all the glory.

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