



A shadow was cast across my road, but I passed through it, and scarcely perceived that it was there. Why was that? Because I had my eye fixed on a strong light beyond, and I did not notice the shadow which otherwise would have distressed me.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Between Heaven and Earth

God's word is comprised of history, prophecy, biography, correspondence, poetry and doctrine. It is, indeed, God's word to man—it is His voice throughout, His truth. Whether penned by Moses, the apostle Paul, Jeremiah, Daniel, or the apostle John, the words are those of the Godhead: composed by the Father, transmitted by the Spirit.

The Bible has many purposes. We use it to learn of God's righteousness, purity, holiness—and to learn how He describes *unholiness*. In its pages we read how Christ lived, and how to live like Him. We also learn, in a limited way, what awaits us in our eternity with Him.

But there is one section of Scripture that is more personal, more intimate than the rest. There we not only can hear God's voice to us, but we can hear our groanings to Him. We dwell in the Psalms. We are there. Our joys and frustration, our sorrow, our failings, our victories. The feelings and emotions for which we cannot find words are there given words. The words we hear repeating in our mind, but are ashamed to speak to our God—they are there.

The Psalms give voice to our most intimate communion with God.

Too Much

There are moments when words fail us. Perhaps we are standing out in an open field, struck dumb by the beauty of a glorious sunset. Our heart swells with admiration for our God, but we haven't the words. It is too much, too magnificent. We want to cry out with exaltation, with profound sentiments worthy of our God, but our brain has turned to mush. It feels as if we are standing on holy ground, before the very throne of God, and our words are too

simple, too childish for such a hallowed place.

The words of our heart are already in the Psalms; King David has already penned them for us.

O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.
When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,
All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!

Psalms 8

Passed Over

Perhaps we are wondering why the wicked always seem to flourish. Perhaps at our office the person who has just been promoted over us is really a back-biting scoundrel—but he has been advanced, while we languish in the same old position. Perhaps the next-door neighbor we know to be a lecherous, foul-mouthed drunk just won the lottery—while we still struggle to pay the bills.

We rise in the morning to news that the worst among us seem always to increase, while the humble are trodden beneath their hobnailed boots.

Around the globe believers are beaten and starved and murdered with impunity, and we wonder, *Where is our God?*

But the psalmist has already voiced these doubts for us—and discovered the reassuring answer to his fears.

Why do You stand afar off, O Lord?

Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;

Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,

And the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord.

The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him.

All his thoughts are, "There is no God."

His ways prosper at all times;

Your judgments are on high, out of his sight;

As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.

He says to himself, "I will not be moved;

Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity."

His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression;

Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.

He sits in the lurking places of the villages;

In the hiding places he kills the innocent;

His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate.

He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair;

He lurks to catch the afflicted;

He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.

He crouches, he bows down,

And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones.

He says to himself, "God has forgotten;

He has hidden His face; He will never see it."

Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Your hand.

Do not forget the afflicted.

Why has the wicked spurned God?

He has said to himself, "You will not require it."

You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand.

The unfortunate commits himself to You;

You have been the helper of the orphan.

Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,

Seek out his wickedness until You find none.

The Lord is King forever and ever;

Nations have perished from His land.

O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble;

You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear

To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,

I love my God, but with no love of mine,

For I have none to give.

I love Thee, Lord; but all the love is Thine,

For by Thy life I live.

I am as nothing, and rejoice to be

Emptied and lost, and swallowed up in Thee.

Thou, Lord, alone, art all Thy children need,

And there is none beside;

From Thee the streams of blessedness proceed

In Thee the blest abide—

Fountain of life, and all-abounding grace,

Our source, our center, and our dwelling-place.

Jeanne Marie de la Motte-Guyon

So that man who is of the earth will no longer
cause terror.

Psalm 10:1-18

Groanings

Perhaps more often than we care to admit, we are overwhelmed by sin. Either we have committed some egregious transgression against the Lord—or we simply have, over time, let temptation have its way with us.

At such times our hearts run cold; even though we know we must, we are ashamed to come before our God. We ache from our sin. The pain has become physical, but our mind cannot put words to our groanings.

We may recall the truth of Scripture—that, in Christ, our sins have already been forgiven. But in this woeful condition the truth rings hollow, plastic. *Surely it couldn't mean that He will forgive what I've done, we think.*

But the Spirit moves with our spirit, drawing us back to confession and release, and there we rediscover the reassuring embrace of the Father's love and grace.

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!

How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not
impute iniquity,

And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.

For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat
of summer.

Selah.

I acknowledged my sin to You,

And my iniquity I did not hide;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";

And You forgave the guilt of my sin.

Selah.

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in
a time when You may be found;

Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

You are my hiding place; You preserve me from
trouble;

You surround me with songs of deliverance.

Selah.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which
you should go;

I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have
no understanding,

Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them
in check,

Otherwise they will not come near to you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall
surround him.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones;

And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

Psalm 32

(more next week)