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CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Few books in the Bible are read more than the book of Psalms. It is a book containing one hundred and fifty spiritual songs and poems which were widely used in the temple and synagogue worship. These hymns ring with heartfelt praise, with thanksgiving, adoration and worship. So many of them are the direct expressions of the soul who is consciously in the presence of God, hence they are marked by deep reality and absolute sincerity. In all the Old Testament there is nothing more instructive, more practical, or more beautiful than these verses which have been cherished by Gods people in every age. C.H. SPURGEON spent twenty years in the study of the Psalms as he wrote that great commentary of many volumes "The Treasury of David". Said he as he completed his task "A tinge of sadness is on my spirit as I quit this section of Scripture, never to find on this earth a richer storehouse, though the whole of the palace of Revelation is open to me. Blessed have been these years spent in meditating, mourning, hoping, believing, and exulting with David. Can I hope to spend hours more joyous on this side of the golden gate? The book of Psalms instructs us in the use of wings as well as words; it sets us both mounting and singing".

How often do we in this our generation, when in need of a quick word of encouragement or assurance immediately thumb our way into the Psalms, and we have not to read far before we come across the very word we need. Whilst we attribute the book in the main to David, who is styled in the Word of God "The sweet psalmist of Israel", he did not write them all, in fact only about one half, seventy-three to be exact, others were written by Asaph, The sons of Korah, onf by Moses, and quite a few are anonymous, but whoever the writer might be, one theme runs right through the book - "CONFIDENCE IN GOD". Moses commences his psalm with the words "Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generation" PS.90 v. 1. He then goes on reminding his heart of the greatness of God, he speaks eloquently of his own frailty, then seeks the blessing of God upon himself and his work. This is so typical of all these Old Testament poems, the writers had great confidence in their God, because He was their dwelling place, and here Moses was speaking from the shelter, the refuge, and the security of that habitation, - "The secret place of the Most High". In actual fact of course, literally, he was in the wilderness, encamped with the tribes of Israel, exposed to scorching

sun, to blinding sand storms, the danger of wild beasts. Month after month, year in year out saw nothing but pitching tents, tarrying for a short while, then picking up and marching on again to another site, continually on the move, living with a disgruntled people, with no comfort or protection other than a canvas roof - not the easiest form of living for a man who had been brought up in the luxury of an Egyptian palace. From this nomadic scene the man of God looks up as he watches the smoke spiralling into the heavens from the camp of Israel, and says, "Lord thou art our dwelling place", here is constant change, sometimes the palm trees, more often, the desert, sometimes by the stream, oftentimes far from water, sometimes the fiery serpent, always the burning sand, sometimes a spell of peace, and then the presence of the enemy, never really settled, never really secure. Ah! says Moses as he reminisces, "Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations". - PERFECT CONFIDENCE IN GOD. As we travel through alien territory on our pilgrimage to the "Homeland", how changing is our lot? Seasons of health, periods of sickness, times of prosperity, days of adversity, great joy and happiness, sorrow and distress, the exhilaration of the mountain top, the depression of the dark valley, but there is never a change with regard to our God. He is unchanging, He loved me yesterday, He loves me to-day, He will love me to-morrow, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". JER 31.V.3. "I change not". MAL. 3-V.6. Whatever our position or condition, we are never better off, or worse off in God; prospects may be blighted, hopes blasted, joy withered, everything mildewed by disappointment but we have lost nothing of what we have in God. The Christian never becomes poorer and never grows richer in this connection; the heart of the Eternal is not subject to change, and this is our "DWELLING PLACE". In another Psalm the writer spoke of the God who "Taught him from his youth", he then goes on to take comfort in the fact that "Now when he is old and grey headed God will not forsake him" PS. 71-V17-18.

The Lord is our keeper, He is our shade, He will not suffer our feet to be moved. He that keepeth us never slumbers. PS.121. He delivers from the fowler, from the noisome pestilence, from the terror by night, from the arrow by day, no evil shall befall us, His angels are given charge over us, His love is set upon us, He covers us with His feathers, we trust under His wings, His truth is our shield and buckler, He is our fortress, we dwell under the very shadow of the Almighty. PS. 91. Yes all the Psalms peel out

the same message "CONFIDENCE IN GOD". Toplady lived some three thousand years after the man who wrote the ninetieth psalm, but his experience was precisely the same, for he wrote:-

"A Sovereign protector I have, Unseen, yet forever at hand, Unchangeably faithful to save, Almighty to rule and command, He smiles and my comforts abound, His grace as the dew shall descend And walls of salvation surround the soul He delights to defend".

"Inspirer and hearer of prayer, Thou shepherd and guardian of Thine, My all to Thy covenant care I sleeping and waking resign. If Thou art my shield and my sun, the night is no darkness to me; And, fast as my moments roll on, They bring me but nearer to Thee".

Another three hundred years have passed by since the days of Toplady, but the experience of the Christian is always the same "He is the dwelling place of His people in all generations" - What a habitation is ours, what rest and composure in Him? the peace, the quiet, the stillness, the undisturbed calm of the realm into which we have been brought; but do we always reside here? It should be our permanent residence, our home. Home speaks of privacy, of intimacy, where love is shown without reserve, where heart secrets are told, a place of absolute trust, where nothing is hidden, where there is no restraint, no camouflage, - transparent sincerity. Happy and healthy indeed is our state if in this respect we can say "Lord Thou art my dwelling place" - I am completely "at home with Thee".

Furthermore, this habitation is the dwelling place of all Gods people of all ages; what an abode in this sense? We have great affection for our homes because of our deep attachment to those who live there, they are our kith and kin, flesh of our flesh, here are blood relationships which can never be broken, so in the spiritual. Here dwell the redeemed of the Lord of all time, each individual forming part of the very warp and woof of Gods eternal pattern for His elect, the innumerable company whom no man can number, all dwelling in Him, and all in perfect unison, - what an attachment!

Possibly the crowning thought with regard to this "Dwelling place" is its permanency. Sometimes people are evicted from their homes, some homes through flood, fire, earthquake or enemy action are destroyed and people are left

homeless; at best, no house can ever be termed everlasting the great castles of history with their immense walls crumble and decay over the centuries, but not our "Dwelling place", for this habitation is "Eternal in the heavens", Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations", The Eternal God is our Refuge", We dwelt in Him in His eternal design in Christ long before we dwelt on earth, - yea before the earth was even formed, we have always been there, it is our permanent abode, we shall never change our habitation in our God we have permanence which is ABSOLUTE, "He is from everlasting to everlasting" PS. 41.V.13. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". IS. 26.V.4. and through His Sovereign Grace we have this "Everlasting consolation" 2. Thess. 2.V.16. What cheer, what consolation indeed, in an age of decay when the very world is tottering, to know that "The Eternal God is our Refuge and underneath are the EVERLASTING ARMS. Deut. 33-V.27.

May our confidence ever be in our God, that amidst all the turmoil of earth, we always, "Return unto Thy Rest O my soul" PS.116.V.7. To the "Lord who hath been our dwelling place in all generations". The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, which was, and which is to come THE ALMIGHTY. REV. 1.V.8.

W.H.M.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & INFORMATION.

The first three months of the year always seem to be the quietest months of our church life, this is understandable, with sickness always much more prevalent at this season, and the weather making things more difficult especially for some of the not quite so young. However, we have known much of the Lord's presence and the continued help of The Holy Spirit. ... May this unison and true fellowship ever be on the increase among us. This past quarter has also brought us the added expenditure of a new amplifier at a cost of £80. How thankful and encouraged we all were, when, after the special offering, it was announced that £90 had been given toward this. Now we have the re-wiring of the premises to face up to. Expert opinions were brought in on this, and all agreed it was a case of new wiring throughout the lighting circuits. Six estimates were received ranging from £180 to

£270. Work has been put in hand with a local contractor in the sum of £201.00. By the time that this report is in your hands the work may well be completed, and our confidence is in a faithful God who we believe will, through the gifts of His people supply the amount needed for this essential renovation. The quarter which we now enter brings us into increased activity ... the Annual Convention when Mr Malcom Watts of Salisbury will be our speaker, and the commencement of the "Drive-in" church on 30th May.

As we contemplate all this as a small fellowship, how we feel our weakness, yet "Our God is able" and as each member pulls their weight in both the physical, material, and above all, spiritual, so shall we know His enabling, and so will His Will be done, and His purposes fulfilled through us. As will be seen in the Church Calendar we have several short series of ministry on Thursday evenings, and the teaching ministry on Sunday mornings will continue on the subject of "Spiritual Union".

Martyrs of The Reformation

A letter written by Lady Jane Grey (aged 17 yrs), the night before her execution, to her sister Katherine:-

I have here sent you, good sister Katherine, a book, which although it be not outwardly trimmed with gold, yet inwardly it is more worth than precious stones. It is the book dear sister, of the Law of the Lord. It is His testament and last will, which He bequeathed unto us wretches; which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy; and if you with a good mind read it, and with an earnest mind do purpose to follow it, it shall bring you to an immortal and everlasting life. It shall teach you to live, and learn you to die. It shall win you more than you should have gained by the possession of your woeful father's lands. For as, if God had prospered him, you should have inherited his lands; so. if you apply diligently to this book, seeking to direct your life after it, you shall be an inheritor of such riches as neither the covetous shall withdraw from you, neither thief shall steal, neither yet the moths corrupt. Desire with David, good sister, to understand the Law of the Lord God. Live still to die, that you by death may enter eternal life. Trust not that the tenderness of your age

shall lengthen your life; for as soon, if God call, goeth the young as the old; and labour always to learn to die. Defy the world, deny the devil, and despise the flesh, and delight yourself only in the Lord. Be penitent for your sins, yet despair not; be strong in faith and yet presume not, and desire with St. Paul to be dissolved and to be with Christ, with whom even at midnight be waking, lest when death cometh and stealeth upon you as a thief in the night, you be with the evil servant, found sleeping, and lest for lack of oil, you be found like the five foolish virgins, and like him that had not on the wedding garment, and then ye be cast out from the marriage. Rejoice in Christ, as I do. Follow the steps of your master Christ, and take up your cross; lay your sins on His back, and always embrace Him. As touching my death, rejoice as I do good sister, that I shall be delivered of this corruption, and put on incorruption. For I am assured that I shall for losing mortal life, win immortal life, the which I pray God grant you, and send you His grace to live in His fear, and to die in the true Christian faith, from the which, in God's name, I exhort you that you never swerve, neither for hope of life, nor for fear of death. For if you will deny His truth for to lengthen your days, God will deny you and yet shorten your life. But if you will cleave unto Him, He will prolong your days to your comfort and His glory, to the which glory God bring me now, and you hereafter, when it pleaseth Him to call you. Fare you well, good sister, and put your only trust in God, who only must help you.

The next day on the morning of February 12th 1554 this girl laid her head upon the block and so passed into her eternal reward.

Laurence Saunders, one-time reader in the minster at Litchfield writes to his wife from prison.

Grace, mercy, and peace in Christ our Lord, Entirely beloved wife, even as unto my own soul and body, so do I daily in my hearty prayer wish unto you; for I do daily, twice at least in this sort remember you and I do not doubt dear wife, but that both I and you, as we are written in the book of life so we shall together enjoy the same everlastingly, through the grace and mercy of God our dear Father, in His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. And for this present life, let us wholly appoint ourselves to the will of our good God to glorify him either by life or by death; and even that same merciful Lord make us worthy to honour Him either way as pleaseth Him, Amen. I am cheerful, I thank my

God and my Christ, in who, and through whom I shall be able to fight a good fight, and finish a good course, and then receive the crown, which is laid up in store for me, and all true soldiers of Christ. Wherefore, wife, let us, in the name of our God, fight lustily to overcome the flesh, the devil, and the world. What our harness and weapons be in this kind of fight, look in the sixth chapter of the Ephesians, and pray, pray, pray. I would that you make no suit for me in any wise. Thank you know who, for her most sweet and comfortable putting me in remembrance of my journey whither I am passing. God send us all good speed and a joyful meeting. I have too few such friends to further me in that journey, which is indeed the greatest friendship. The blessing of God be with you all.

A prisoner in the Lord.

L. Saunders.

Shortly after on the 8th February 1555 he was led to a park outside the city of Coventry clad in an old shirt and gown, bare footed; oftentimes he fell on the ground in prayer. When he was come nigh to the place the officer appointed to see the execution done said to Mr Saunders, that he was one who had marred the queen's realm with false doctrine and heresy, therefore he deserved death, but if he would revoke his heresies, the queen would pardon him. Mr Saunders replied "It is not I, nor my fellow preachers of Gods truth that have hurt the queen's realm, but it is yourself and such as are of you who have resisted Gods Holy Word, I hold no heresies, but the doctrine of God, the blessed gospel of Christ, that hold I, that believe I, that have I taught and that I will never revoke." With that his tormentor cried "Away with him!" and away went Laurence Saunders with a cheerful courage towards the fire. Upon reaching the spot he fell to his knees and once more prayed, then arose and took the stake to which he should be chained in his arms and kissed it saying "Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life", and being fastened to the stake, and fire put to him, he sweetly slept in the Lord, and so triumphantly passed another "Faithful unto death."

THESE TWO - GRACE AND SIN - are like buckets in a well, when one is up the other is down. The more grace thrives in the soul, the more sin dies in it.

THOMAS BROOKS (PURITAN).