

Not a Bone Shall Be Broken

*“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”*

PSALM THIRTY-FOUR

THIS psalm, like all psalms, is beautiful, comforting, and instructive. It is filled with interesting and thought-provoking statements by the wisdom of the Spirit. If we could fully absorb in ourselves the spirit of this psalm, fully learn all its wise instructions, and fully conform to all its loving commands—we would be assured of eternal life.

Eternal life, like every other practical activity, is simply a matter of cause and effect, of following certain clear, specific instructions, and getting certain guaranteed results. Truly the mercy and grace of God are very essential ingredients—but these are guaranteed by God's unchangeable promise *to those who do the right things*.

The key is OBEDIENCE. Do what God says. Take the trouble to find out His will, and *do* it. It's just that simple. *No one* will make it who doesn't do this. All the wishing and hoping and praying and good intention in the world is no substitute for simple obedience. And *all* will make it who *do* do this. God has promised.

Verse 1: *"I will bless the Lord at all times:
His praise shall continually be in my mouth."*

We have most of the secret right there. If we “continually”—at all times—fill our hearts and minds and lips with praise of God, it will at one stroke eliminate all complaining, all foolish talking, all unhappiness, all self-pity—all the things that make most people unlovable and unloved. These things of the flesh just can't exist together with a heart that is full of praise and blessing of God.

It will also, if it is *true* praise, make us continually study and meditate on God's Word to find out how to better please Him. Praise that is not associated with careful obedience is no praise or pleasure at all to Him, for it is of the flesh and unsanctified.

Praise—continual, at-all-times, heart-outpouring praise—is the only sensible and practical and mature frame of mind. If we do not find ourselves irresistibly overwhelmed by this frame of mind, we have not yet made true contact with divine things. This lack is not a tragedy—unless we are satisfied with it. It is just a sign that we have not yet thought life through, and studied and prayed and meditated enough. We are too much in the world. We haven't had the great awakening to God that makes all the present seem a meaningless dream.

The one great *Reality* of life—the one great, bright, glorious, ever-shining FACT—is that *God is Love*, and that—

"ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God," and "Great peace have they that love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them."

Get this in sharp and clear focus—and everything else fades away. Get this sharp and clear, and continual praise is irresistible.

Verse 2: *"My soul shall make her boast in the Lord."*

"Boast" here means "grateful exultation, thankful rejoicing, worshipful assurance." My "soul"—my life, my whole being.

Verse 2: "*The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*"

No one lives to himself. We affect all with whom we come in contact, either for good or ill. And at that great last day, we shall have to give account for what our influence has done to others, or *has failed to do*. If we manifest a consistent life of praise and thanksgiving and rejoicing in God, especially in times of sorrow or trial, "*the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*" They will be upbuilt and comforted and encouraged to do likewise. They will *see* the power of faith. Joy breeds joy, and faith breeds faith—

"*I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in Truth*" (2 John 4).

The humble are the only intelligent people—those who see themselves, and all mankind, as nothing; and God as everything: those who see all passing things *as* passing things, even natural life itself. They have no pride, or touchiness, or self-esteem that needs to be built up and catered to. They have no natural ambition or desire. They clearly perceive the emptiness of all lust and worldly pleasure. They are always happy and contented in God. They have no juvenile need for being entertained, or mollified, or pacified.

Verse 3: "*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together.*"

"With me" and "together" are the thoughts here. Again, no man liveth unto himself. It is easy, and it is selfishly pleasing, to be wrapped up in ourselves and our own little petty day-to-day concerns. But it is not sensible. It is not godly. It is not healthy. It is not spiritual. It is not even *happy*, compared to what real happiness can be.

"*The hand cannot say to the eye, I have no need of thee.*"

The children of God are all members of one another. If they are *not*—if they don't perceive and practice this—then they are not the children of God. It is a glorious communism, a *true* communism, of which the natural man has no conception: one for all, and all for one. It is God's way. It is God's command. The way of selfish and self-seeking individuality leads only to rejection and death.

The true children of God are as inseparable as Siamese twins—with common organs of life and activity; and if we hope for life, we *must* enthusiastically adapt ourselves to this basic reality, for God in His wisdom has ordained it that way—

"*We ought not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbor for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself*" (Rm.15).

Verse 4: "*I sought the Lord.*"

We must seek. We must make a real effort. We must be prepared to put time and labor and *joyful enthusiasm* into the search. We cannot just sit back and take God for granted. He has to be diligently sought for: "*Seek, and ye shall find.*" There's no excuse: it's guaranteed. It's entirely up to us.

Where do we seek? There is only one place: *His Word*. There is only one way: with constant, fervent prayer. God says (Jr. 29:13)—

"*Ye shall find Me when ye shall search for Me with ALL your heart.*"

Let us stop, and think, and face this frankly: it has got to be *all*, or we are just wasting our time. We shall never find God until we seek with all our heart, putting everything else away.

Verse 4: "*He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.*"

Not: "He delivered me from all the things I feared" He doesn't do that, for these things are necessary for our character and development. (Of course *that* deliverance will come in the

end, when the purpose of these things has been accomplished). But here it's—

"He delivered me from all my fears."

—from the fears themselves. This is a far deeper, far greater blessing. This must come from God. We cannot do it ourselves. How often, from one end of Scripture to the other, do we find the *command* and the assurance, "Fear not"—

"Fear not, Abraham" *"Fear not, children of Israel"* *"Fear not, Daniel"*

"Fear not, Jacob" *"Fear not, Joshua"* *"Fear not, Mary"*

"Fear not, Moses" *"Fear not, Gideon"* *"Fear not, Paul"*

—and so we find, over and over and over throughout the Scripture, right down to the Revelation—

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer...be faithful unto death."

Fear is the great enemy of peace. We must conquer fear: and there is a way, and only one—

"There is no fear in love: He that feareth is not made perfect in love: Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Verse 5: *"They looked unto Him, and were lightened."*

Here, in almost the same words, is what Paul says to the brethren at Corinth (2 Cr. 3:18; 4:6)—

"We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory . .

"God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

God is light. There is no other light. All else is darkness. Apart from God, apart from His Light, we are merely groping through life in gross darkness: seeing nothing, understanding nothing: mere bats and moles, mere animals in a black tunnel of oblivion—never comprehending, never enjoying, the splendors and beauties that the divine Light reveals.

There is much food for nourishment and meditation in every verse, but we must pass on to consider the more central and outstanding ones—

Verse 7: *"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."*

We do not think enough about this aspect of God's providence. It is related to the casting out of fear. The angels are real—much more real and substantial than we are ourselves, for they are immortal and indestructible, while we are but a passing breath that could be snuffed out in a moment. And they are right here on the earth, among us. If we are among the children of God, and we hope and pray that we are, then there is an angel watching over each of us continually, and present at all our assemblies.

We remember that Paul instructed according to the Spirit's wisdom—a beautiful type to the mind of the Spirit, but so annoying to the rebellious mind of the flesh—that sisters should wear a special covering in the assemblies of the saints "*because of the angels*." Herein sisters are especially privileged to typify the glorious Bride of Christ in his presence. Their humility

is their glory.

Angels have rarely appeared visibly to men, but throughout the record of Scripture there are enough instances of such appearances to give us much comfort and understanding and strength, if we will meditate upon them.

"He shall give His angels charge concerning thee."

Some, we are reminded, have entertained angels unawares, and we are told to bear this in mind in all our contacts with others. We never know when God is testing us in this respect. Any common incident may be an angelic visitation. It would be tragedy indeed to find at last that we had destroyed our salvation by being unkind and ungracious and ungodly toward an angel of God.

Verse 8: *"O taste and see that the Lord is good!"*

This is surely the key verse of this psalm, and one of the key verses of all Scripture. An actual, practical *demonstration* is infinitely more convincing and conclusive than the strongest and most logical of arguments. We can prove by reason and Scripture and evidence that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him: but how much more simple and satisfying to "*taste and see!*"

In spiritual things, the "taste and see" approach has an even greater advantage and importance than in natural things, for the results are divinely controlled, and we are specifically told that only those who *do* obey will be permitted to understand. Only those who "taste" will be allowed to "see." Jesus said (John 7:17)—

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

God does not permit mere speculators and intellectualizers to be convinced and converted. He deliberately blinds them, as we are repeatedly told.

The sad part is that very few—either "in the Truth" or out of it—are willing to give the glorious divine promise of "taste and see" a full and fair trial. They have various degrees of interest and desire, but they will not accept the whole program. In natural things it is considered an indication of folly to invest in a major item on which all one's welfare depends, and then not follow—or even bother to learn—the instructions concerning its successful operation.

But in spiritual things, we tend to substitute wishes and hopes and good intentions for careful study and learning of facts. The Bible is a large book. It is a detailed message from God of how to obtain eternal life. It is *all* necessary, or it would not be there.

It *can* make us "wise unto salvation." Studied constantly, it can change us from the natural, ignorant animals we all are to start with, into something useful for God's eternal purpose—something He can joyfully save, and not have to cast sadly away as useless at the last great day of judgment. The rest of this verse says—

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

If we were asked, "Do you trust in God?" we would say, "Yes, of course." But if the questioner said, "Give some evidence, some proof," what have we to offer? James says (2:17-18)—

"Faith without works is dead ... I will show you my faith by my works."

Paul tells us how men of faith of old time gave proof of their faith. Noah built an ark on dry land, and preached 120 years, to the derision of the wise of the world. Abraham left his comfortable home (and Ur *was* comfortable in those days), wandered 100 years as a stranger,

and offered up his son. Moses abandoned the wealth and luxury and power of Egypt, and chose affliction with the people of God. Others were mocked, scourged, beaten, imprisoned, stoned, sawn asunder, "not accepting deliverance," all to manifest that they trusted God.

We are not tested to these extremes. But we *are* tested. We are faced with a choice. The fact that we may ignore it, and fail it, does not mean that the test has not come. We are called upon to demonstrate faith and trust by following the course of spiritual wisdom, which is folly to the natural man. In its simplest terms, we are just called upon to *obey*. This doesn't just mean being baptized, and breaking bread, and going to the meetings. It is far more than that—far more searching. The commands of God are many, and have a direct bearing on every act and decision of our lives. It *must* be that way, for their whole purpose is to transform our mind and nature and character: they *must* therefore affect our every act.

At every step, we must make the conscious decision between the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and the mind of the flesh as we naturally find it in our own thoughts and desires. *This* is the only way godly character can be built up.

Whatever action is taken, whatever decision is made, that is not consciously motivated by a scripturally-enlightened desire to please God, is *sin*, for it is of the natural flesh. "Taste and see" means try *God's* way. Try God's way in *everything* as a complete pattern of life. Put away all the world's selfish, fleshly, God-ignoring "common sense" rules and maxims, and try the Spirit's way—learned by constant, loving, prayerful study of the Word.

We then just may make the marvelous, unearthly discovery that we had never really lived at all before.

Verse11: "*Come, ye children, hearken unto me:*

I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

It is something that has to be *learned*, and it is a lifetime's work to learn it—with ever-increasing depth and understanding. The first instruction is—

Verse13: "*Keep thy tongue from evil.*"

Keep thy tongue. The Spirit saith (Pr.10:19)—

"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin."

Even to the dim eye of common sense, this is obvious. Being what we are—weak creatures of flesh—it is inevitable that if we talk a lot, much is bound to be natural and of the flesh, and therefore sin. The Scriptures emphasize nothing more strongly than the absolute necessity of rigidly guarding the tongue, if we hope for life—

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"
(Matt. 12:37).

If we find ourselves talking about others, judging and criticizing and condemning others, complaining, finding fault, gossiping about what others do and don't do, should do and shouldn't do, then let us be moved with a terrible fear at our fleshly folly in not bridling our tongue, and seek by the power and help of God to change our ways before it is too late.

"Love believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, thinketh no evil, suffereth long, and is kind."

Truly error must be faced, wrong-doing must be confronted, sound fellowship must be maintained. Serious matters cannot faithfully be ignored. But in this present, sad, stumbling, dark vale of tears, love must of necessity, in our day to day relationships, cover a vast multitude of sins.

Verse 18: *"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart:
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."*

A broken heart and a contrite spirit. These are essential qualifications for salvation, so it is urgent that we know what is involved, and how it is accomplished. A "broken heart" is some-thing that must be prepared and offered to God in sacrifice—

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

A broken heart is not primarily the result of *outward* affliction and sorrow, though such things can greatly contribute to its development, and therefore Paul says (Acts 14:22)—

"We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."

Even of Jesus it is said (Heb. 5:8)—

"He learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

Jeremiah declares (17:9)—

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

This is all of us, in our natural, animal state—

"In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing."

The deceitfulness of the heart is principally *self*-deceit, leading us to think we are other than we really are—that salvation is an easy thing we can drift into, instead of agonizing for—that we can serve both God and Mammon—

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cr. 10:12).

"When ye have done all, say, We are unprofitable servants" (Lk.17:10).

What hope then have we if we *haven't* done all—if we haven't made the utmost effort to serve and obey?—

"If the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18).

If we are more concerned with criticizing others than criticizing *ourselves*, we are being deceived by our wicked heart. The more enlightened and concerned we are about examining and criticizing ourselves, the more we face and recognize our own shortcomings, then the more kind and charitable we shall be toward others, knowing that—

"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Mt. 7:2).

A broken and a contrite spirit are developed by searching self-examination *by the light of God's Word*. Without the light of the Word, the search is meaningless, however strenuous and sincere and well-meaning, for then it is just darkness examining darkness. This is the case with all the world's self-examining and self-analyses, leading to nothing but further confusion. There is only one Light.

The broken heart and contrite spirit that God requires is the repudiation of the foolish will and desires of the flesh, and complete submission to the beauty and wisdom of the will of God—

"Thy will, not mine, be done."

Verse 19: *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous:
but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."*

We are assured (Lam. 3:32-33)—

“The Lord doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men: Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.”

That is, He has no pleasure in, nor desire for, the affliction of men. It is simply a *necessary* means to a glorious end, in the development of a broken and purified heart. If we have afflictions, we can be *sure* they are of a loving necessity, and they are probably because our character needs the lesson. Our wisdom is to submit in thanksgiving, and to try to learn the lesson they teach—

“He subjected Creation to vanity, not willingly, but in hope” (Rm. 8:20).

Verse 20: *“He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.”*

The significance of no broken bones is that affliction is so controlled that there is no permanent injury or deformation. We remember that under the Law, whenever in chastisement there was any permanent injury to a bond-servant, the owner had to let him go free, even for just a broken tooth—for he had transgressed the limits of permitted chastisement.

Again under the Law, not a bone of the Passover lamb must be broken (Ex. 12:46), and these two passages in Exodus and Psalms find their spiritual fulfillment in John 19:33-36—

“When they came to Jesus, they brake not his legs . . . That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.”

This psalm, therefore, has led us—as all psalms do, as all the Scriptures do—to the sinless Son of God; the spotless Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the perfect—the *only* perfect—embodiment of the broken heart and contrite spirit that is so precious in the sight of God—

“Not a bone of him shall be broken ...”

“Not a grain of corn—of the true wheat—the true bread—shall be lost.”

“This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.”

“We are members of his Body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

And again the thought comes around—

“The Body is One, and hath many members, and all the members, being many, are One Body. The foot cannot say, I am not of the Body:”

—what good, to itself or anyone, is an amputated foot?

“The ear cannot say, I am not of the Body.”

—what good is an amputated ear?

“The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee.”

In God's wisdom, every member needs every other: and the Body needs every member.

“The members should have the same care one for another. Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Ye are the Body of Christ.”

“NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.”

Bro.G.V.Growcott