

PSALM THIRTY-FIVE AND THIRTY-SIX

6. In the midst of trouble David thanks God—what a lesson for us. How do we develop this capacity?
7. The words of Graham Scroggie are so good here—“Have you ever felt the thrill of doing something really great? If not, begin by singing a song in the night of your present, or next trouble.—*Feet of lead, and a sore head: but daring wings for him who sings.*” (*Psalms* p. 207, 208)

PSALM 36

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Oracles False and True, Prompting Prayer and Praise.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Personified Transgression Deluding and Driving on its Victim. Stanza II., vers 5, 6, Jehovah's Kindness with its Associated Divine Attributes. Stanza III., vers. 7-9, Jehovah's Kindness Experienced by Men. Stanza IV., vers. 10-12, Prayer for Protection, suddenly Giving Place to Triumph.

(Lm.) By the Servant of Jehovah—by David.

- 1 An oracle of transgression¹ hath the lawless one in the midst of his heart,
there is no dread of God² in the sight of his eyes;
- 2 For it flattereth him as to finding out his hateful iniquity:³
- 3 the words of his mouth are trouble and deceit—
he hath ceased to act circumspectly:
- 4 To make trouble thoroughly he deviseth on his bed;
he taketh his stand on a way not good—
evil doth he not refuse.
- 5 Jehovah! in the heavens is thy kindness,
thy faithfulness reacheth as far as the clouds:
- 6 thy righteousness is like the mountains of GOD,
and thine act of justice are a great deep,—
Man and beast thou savest Jehovah!

1. Graphic: Transgression deified, enthroned in the heart of the lawless one, uttering misleading oracles.

2. The lowest form of respect for Divine things—absent.

3. For various explanations of this verse, see Per.

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- 7 How precious is thy kindness O God!
and the sons of men in the shadow of thy wings take refuge:
8 They are satisfied¹ with the rich provisions of thy house,
and of the full stream of thine own delights thou causest
them to drink;
9 For with thee is the fountain of life.
when thou shinest² light appeareth.³
10 Prolong thy kindness to them who know thee,
and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
11 Do not suffer to invade me the foot of pride,
nor the hand of lawless ones to make me a fugitive.⁴
12 There are fallen the workers of iniquity,⁵
thrust down and not able to rise!

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 36

Sin lurks deep in the hearts of the wicked, forever urging them on to evil deeds. They have no fear of God to hold them back.

2 Instead, in their conceit, they think they can hide their evil deeds and not get caught.

3 Everything they say is crooked and deceitful; they are no longer wise and good.

4 They lie awake at night to hatch their evil plots, instead of planning how to keep away from wrong.

5 Your steadfast love, O Lord, is as great as all the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds!

6 Your justice is as solid as God's mountains. Your decisions are as full of wisdom as the oceans are with water. You are as concerned⁶ for men and animals alike!

7 How precious is Your constant love, O God! All humanity takes refuge in the shadow of Your wings!

8 You feed them with blessings from Your own table and let them drink from Your rivers of delight.

1. *ML.*: "saturated."

2. "Lettest the light shine from thy face, as *Pss.* 4:7, 44:4, 89:16—*Br.*

3. With *Br.*, read (niph'al) *nir'ah*, rather than (kal) *nir'eh*.

4. *Cp.* 31:22.

5. *Or.*: "trouble" ("naughtiness"—*Dr.*).

6. Literally, "You preserve."

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9 For You are the Fountain of Life; our light is from Your Light.

10 Pour out Your unfailing love on those who know You! Never stop giving Your salvation¹ to those who long to do Your will.

11 Don't let these proud men trample me. Don't let their wicked hands push me around.

12 Look! They have fallen. They are thrown down and will not rise again.

EXPOSITION

It is easy to assert that this is a composite psalm, and yet fail to grasp its life-history. Composite it manifestly is, in that its component parts undoubtedly came into existence on distinct and successive occasions, but none the less does it now stand before us as a living unit. Starting with *David*, as in duty bound by the superscript line exhibiting a palace-library tradition behind which we cannot go; and with *David*—probably in his strength of devotion to Jehovah, as if by reason of some signal service rendered by his heroic faith, and so with *David* as emphatically *the servant of Jehovah*;—we awake to the perception that in Stanza I. we have such a startling picture of practical Atheism as could never have been sung alone. Acting as a moral tonic, this fragment prompts the mind that selected it, to appease Devotion's hunger, by finding a fragrant antidote to the poison of Lawlessness to which for some reason it was desired to give currency. This antidote is discovered in the beautiful Song, probably equally Davidic, which now forms Stanzas II. and III. of our psalm: a song, first glowing with all the beauty of Jehovah's *kindness*, as sustained and strengthened by the associate attributes of *faithfulness*, *righteousness* and *justice*; and then eliciting the appreciation of *the sons of men*, as they are thereby drawn *under the shadow of Jehovah's wings*, emboldened to partake of *the rich provisions of Jehovah's house*, and even to *drink of the full stream of Jehovah's delights*. A notable song, indeed; well serving as an antidote to the deadly *oracle of transgression* which here precedes it. But who could find these fragments,—who feel the need to risk the circulation of the poison, and yet lay ready hand on so effective a counter-

1. Literally, "Your righteousness."

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active? We can conjecture who it was, as soon as we can discover among David's sons a man who could see the chilling shadow of another Lawless One extending over the land; and yet, in the face of it, could still sing in faith the antidote Song: especially if, in this inheritor of the Sweet Singer's mantle, we can discover a CO-AUTHOR, who has the gift to adapt these fragments to a new and urgent occasion, and the authority to get them sung. Thus prompted, we eagerly scan the final stanza of this psalm; and by the time we have read its first couplet and found all the previous praise turned into PRAYER, we bethink us of the man who *knew* Jehovah, who was undoubtedly *upright in heart* but still had urgent need to PRAY! the name of the man is on our lips! But before we pronounce it, we read another couplet; and since this couplet apprehends *invasion* and deprecates *the flight of a fugitive*, we hesitate no longer to pronounce the name: it is HEZEKIAH! But there is this more to be said. The entire life-history of this psalm is chequered. This final stanza, we must believe, at first only mounted a little higher in prayer, or concluded with trustful benediction. Soon was the prayer answered; soon, the trustful benediction vindicated; and the same hand that wrote it, gladly erased enough to make way for the thrilling announcement:—

*There are fallen the workers of trouble,
Thrust down, and not able to rise!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Romans 3:18 and consider the New Testament application of the first verse of this psalm. How does the "fear of God" relate to today's world?
2. Isn't it possible that many men have hidden their evil deeds—and died with the secrets untold? Discuss.
3. What presses the evil man to so urgently to do wrong when doing right would be less trouble for everyone? Please do not answer—"Satan does"—we want the reasoning of Satan in our answer; give it!
4. List the qualities of God which call forth admiration—which one obtains from you the highest admiration? Why?
5. Name and discuss at least two "Rivers of delight" from which all humanity drinks.