

The Mercies of a Faithful God Displayed Toward His Loving Saints

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford

"Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."
Psalm 91:14, 15

If you were to find a casket of precious jewels in the street what would you do? You say, "Certainly as an honest man I should try to find the owner." Just so. And if in examining this rich casket, you saw the owner's name engraved upon it, it would enable you at once to do so. It is a similar case here. I have lighted on this casket of precious jewels—of precious promises, more precious than jewels; and, in looking at this casket, I see the very name engraved—the owner's name. Look at the jewels—the promises. "I will answer him." "I will be with him." "I will deliver him." "I will set him on high." "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Well, to whom do these promises belong? Who is this blessed "him" that shall have these things done for him? The Lord has told us. There are three things said of him. One is, "He hath known my name:" another is, "He has set his love upon me:" another is, "He shall call upon me." Now first then, let us look at this character described in these three ways.

I.—First. "*He hath known my name.*" Though this is not mentioned before it is said of him that "*He hath set his love upon me,*" yet we know that it comes first in experience. A man must know the Lord's name before ever he can feel any real love to the Lord. "*He hath known my name.*" Now this is

needful, this is what the Lord does for his people, he causes them to know his name. "They shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest." (Jer. 31:34.) "They shall all;" they shall. The Lord has declared it. They shall know me. Now what is the name of the Lord? When God revealed himself unto Moses, did he not say, "I AM THAT I AM!" This was the way God taught Moses his name, and we may gather from it that whatever God is, that is his name. God is holy—God is just—God is merciful—God is a God of love. Now the sinner must know this. He must know that God is a pure and holy God, and at first when he is beginning to learn this lesson he is completely astonished and appalled by it. He is terrified. It causes him to shrink away and hide himself from God. "How can I appear before God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" And so you see it brings distress into his conscience. It is the first work of the Spirit. "He shall convince of sin," and a sense of God's holiness is that which brings us this conviction—our sin and God's purity. How can the sinner appear before and approach to God? and while he is under the terrors of the law, he is full of distress, and at times, perhaps, wishes he had never been born, and at other times he is tempted with hard thoughts of God, reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not strawed. This is how God is seen in his perverted mind. The devil is at him, and tries all he can to harden his heart against the Almighty. But the terrors of the Almighty have taken hold of him, and he tries many ways to get these arrows extracted; but all his tugging and pulling only make the wound worse. And so he goes on until he is brought to see that God is a God of mercy, and this is revealed to him in and through the Lord Jesus. This is what clears up the mystery, when he sees Christ bleeding on the cross. Here he sees God is both a just God and a Saviour. God is pure and holy, and exacts to the utmost farthing all the enormous debt he owes, and yet to the bleeding broken heart, he, through

Christ, can and does manifest his mercy. Here we see how God's name is really in him. As it is said of old, "My name is in him" (Ex. 23:21), and is it not said of the Lord Jesus, "I am Alpha and Omega!" (Rev. 1:11.) "Alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and "Omega" is the last letter. The "A" and the "Z," including all. So is the Lord Jesus, and in him we see all the attributes of Deity—all that GOD is. He is the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and all is included in him. Here we see God is love. We don't see it anywhere as we see it in a crucified Christ. Herein is love, that God gave his only begotten Son! (John 4:10)—was ever love like this—to die for the ungodly? Yes, when we were without strength, in due time, the appointed time settled in covenant mercies, Christ died for the ungodly. Oh! what a sweet word that must be and is to my soul. "For the ungodly." I come in here; if it were not for that, that he died for the ungodly, I should now despair; but he died for the ungodly, and herein we see God indeed is love, and all that God is we may see in the Lord Jesus. "Now this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

II.—"*He hath known my name.*" Now this leads him to love—to love God—to set a love upon him. And we see the cause. "Because God first loved us:" therefore it was we were brought to set our love upon him. Yes, we don't love we know not what! When Paul went to Athens what did he see? An altar with this inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." (Acts 17:23.) Ah! God is in some measure known—the God that the child of grace is brought to worship, and it is this knowledge of God that causes us to love him—and mark you, it is the knowledge of God by the remission of sins. What a striking word this is to give unto his people, to give to them this knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins! As much as to say you will never know God—not really, not

satisfactorily—till your sins are pardoned. Then will the mystery be opened. Then it will not be a speculative point, a mere matter of opinion, you will know it,—for yourself you will know it; feelingly, by the remission of sins. This is how God gives to his people this knowledge of salvation. It is not God's way to give the knowledge of salvation, and afterwards the remission of sins, but actually by it—by *it*—through the remission of sins. Because then we have a knowledge, then we know it. And does not the prophet Isaiah say, "Butter and honey shall he eat!"—and what is the result?—then he knows and can discern between the evil and the good, so as to refuse the evil and choose the good. (Isa. 7:15.) Now there are some people that are in legal bondage, and have never been brought to the knowledge of the truth, yet they are set up as critics in the church, and they will find fault with this and that. But does not the prophet say, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things," &c. (Isa. 25:6), evidently writing of the blessed gospel—the gospel of the grace of God. He shall feast upon the gospel. Then he shall discern, then he shall have a right knowledge of things, he shall know how to refuse the evil and how to choose the good, when he has had this gospel feast. "He hath set his love upon me." Yes. This is the result of the knowledge with which he is favoured. We cannot know the Lord and not love him. It is a contradiction. It is impossible to know him and not to love him. Our blindness, our ignorance, our unbelief often prevail, and our love waxes cold. But when this knowledge is communicated, and when our eyes are opened to behold him, we see him and we are ravished with his beauty. "He hath set his love upon me."

III.—And there is another thing said of him: "*He shall call upon me.*" "He shall." What, after all this that he has done? We may well suppose that he calls upon God that he may know him and have his heart's affections set upon God. Yes,

and he shall call upon him after that; and it is here plainly intimated when it is he calls, or "*shall* call" upon the Lord. Even in trouble. What! shall he be brought into trouble? Yes, he shall; his heart pants when his pardon is signed, and his peace is procured, but from that moment his conflict begins, and a conflict it is. He finds fresh troubles coming in upon him constraining him to ask God that God would help him, that God would appear for him, and give him a fresh token for good. Like the poor woman who said "Lord, help me." Every fresh case of distress that he is made acquainted with, every trouble he is brought into, gives him an errand to the throne of grace. "He shall call upon me." And this is the result of knowing and of loving God. "Because he has known my name, he knows I am able to deliver him, and, therefore, it is in his heart to look to me; for none else can help but the Almighty God. He knows my name, he knows I am a God of love, that I sympathize and feel compassion for my children, and this encourages him." We have not a high priest to go to that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. No; but he was made acquainted with these things, he has borne our cross, he has carried our sorrows, he has been tempted in all points like as we are, and he is so gracious and so merciful he never forsakes the poor and needy sinner that calls upon him. How this encourages us to go unto him! Where shall we go? To whom shall we look? Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life! He is encouraged by this knowledge. But if he has not all this encouragement, if he has not sufficient life in the exercise of prayer, he shall be urged on by the pressure of his trouble. Partly, as it were, driven, partly drawn. This is how God's people are made to call upon him. The urgency of the case is one thing, the absolute necessity of the matter in this time of need, and then we have to be drawn by what God has done for us in former days, and this encourages—"He *has* delivered, he *does* deliver, and I trust he *will* yet deliver." Is he not the

same God? Is he a fickle and changeable being? No, and, therefore, he rests upon him. He is ever the same; therefore, cast all your care upon him; for he changeth not.

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." I must hurry on. There is so much in this part, so many precious promises are herein contained, that I cannot linger. Let us look at these promises. The first that I mentioned is, "*I will answer.*" What would be the use of his calling if the Lord did not answer? "He shall call and I will answer him." Now here is something by which to weigh up our state and our religion. We may know what it is to bend our knees at the footstool in prayer. We may know what it is to utter words or we may know what it is to seem to be in earnest prayer, but what do we know of the answer? You would not like to be writing letters continually to an individual at a distance and never, never receive one word by way of answer. You expect an answer. Now, after prayer, are you looking out for an answer? God says of his people that they shall call upon him, and that he will surely answer them. Now, how does God answer his people? He answers them by his precious word, dropping it into their heart. Is the soul in trouble? Yes. And does that constrain it to call upon God? Well, what is his trouble; for according to the trouble so is the answer. Is it a sense of sin and guilt? Is it that that casts you down? Maybe the Lord drops down a word like this, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and thy sins as a cloud." (See Isa. 43:25 and 44:22.) Oh! what a precious answer! Did God ever drop such a word upon your soul, or one equivalent to it; for that is a type and symbol of many precious words, where the Lord promises to wash away filth and guilt. "There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." Is it open—open to you? Has God spoken a word to your heart, a word opening this fountain? Is it that you are in trouble in worldly matters? Why, God can and will

in his own time give you a gracious answer. "Leave it with me, cast your burdens upon me. Your heavenly Father knows what need you have of temporal things; there is not a hair of your head, no, not a single hair, but what is numbered." What? are you troubled about what you shall eat or what you shall drink? The Lord answers all these things. He says, "My children, take no thought at all about it; am I not your Father, your heavenly Father, and I know what need you have of these things?" Is it that the soul is perplexed with a thousand cares, so that everything seems opposed, everything seems contrary? The Lord drops upon the heart such a word as this: "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) These are apparent contradictions. All, all these things that seem to jar, they shall all sweetly harmonize. They shall all work together for thy good. How many gracious answers the Lord drops upon the hearts of his people! Every promise that has been applied sweetly to you is by way of answer,—an answer to all these doubts and fears, all this questioning, all this misgiving. These precious words are the Lord's words, and he speaks them—he speaks them to the heart. David might well remind the Lord and say, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." (Psa. 119:49.) You see he brings his holy crutch, I may say, that holy, precious promise, and it never wears out, it never waxes old, in one sense, after the language of men, but it is ever new and sweet, and God makes it so. The child of God brings the old word and says, "Lord, remember this word. Didst thou not speak it once to my heart?—'I will answer.'" The Lord declares he will answer. And he says another thing: "I will be with him, in trouble I will be with him." That is more than sending an answer. You may have an answer if you write to a distant correspondent, and he may give you to a certain extent satisfaction in the answer. But if it is a father or a husband you want him home. What he says to you at a

distance, and by way of letter, does not fully satisfy. It may in some measure do for a time; but you wait his return. And then he says, "I will be with him," "I will be with him in trouble," "I will," "I will manifest myself unto him." Ah! this precious manifestation of the Lord; that is sweeter than all. Now, you know what the Lord said to his disciples just before his departure—"I will see you again. I am about to go away, and it is expedient for you that I do go away, but I will come again. I will." (See John 16.) Well, he went away according to his word, and though they had the promise to rest upon, though he did say, "I will come again," though he did say it was expedient for them that he should go away, but that he would come again, still they were not satisfied, still they wanted something more. What was it they wanted? Why *himself* actually to be present. And you remember how the eleven were met together in despondency, gloomy it may be, and casting down one another, or maybe they were trying to cheer one another, we don't know what they were conversing about; but we know they were in a strait. The Lord was not with them. But the Lord came, the doors being shut, and he said, "Peace be unto you;" and he showed them his hands and his feet and his side. What then? Why, "then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Ah! this was all they needed to fill up the measure of their joy. They actually had been with the Lord and had him present with them. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. "I will be with him in trouble." I shall never forget one memorable season of trouble that I was in many, many years ago. Oh! I cannot tell the depths of distress I was plunged into! Oh! I wished to have done with time and sense, weary of life, longing to be gone, feeling I could not bear it. I was in such a way I cannot describe it, and all at once this passage dropped upon my heart, "Fear not, I am with thee." (Isa. 41:10.) All my trouble left me; all was gone; peace and light and joy and gladness filled my heart. It was enough—"Fear

not, I am with thee," and I felt the Lord was with me; and feeling the Lord was with me, how could I sink "with such a prop as bears the earth's huge pillars up." I could have gone to heaven then. The Lord was with me. "I will be with him in trouble." And the Lord says more—"I will deliver him." "I will deliver him!" oh what a precious promise! Whatever the trouble be, "I will deliver him." Deliverance is from the Lord. He not only supports and sustains us in the midst of trouble, keeps our head above water, but he can actually deliver us out of it. He can cause us to stand as upon dry ground. He can raise us up out of the horrible pit and miry clay where we are sunk and set our feet upon a rock and establish our goings. "I will deliver him." Have you no deliverances to record, no mercies of any nature? Can you not look back and see when and how the Lord delivered you? "I will deliver him."

"And I will honour him and set him on high, on the top of this rock, and then the waves may dash and beat in fruitless efforts at his feet." They cannot move the rock. The immoveable Jehovah set me on the rock that is higher than I, and higher than these floods, and higher than the range of men or devils. I will raise him up out of the reach of all his foes; they shall not be able to come near unto him. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.) "It shall not come nigh thee." (Psa. 91:8.) Oh! precious promises! I remember that word once on a memorable occasion coming to my soul—"It shall not come nigh thee." There was a trouble hanging over me like a thick thundercloud, and that word gave me such quietness—"It shall not come nigh thee;" and I shall never forget how this word came to me in a dream of the night. Now, I am not for dreams and visions in a fanciful way; but I had this dream at this particular time. It seemed as though a cloud was over the whole face of the

heavens, and at length it burst into a most awful storm and tempest. The lightnings flashed, the thunders roared, and a thunderbolt fell at my feet, but I was as calm and unmoved as I am now. This word seemed to drop at the very moment, and I had no fear—no, not the slightest; and I shall never forget that time and the sweet effects. They were with me when I awoke, and they were with me for days—"It shall not come nigh thee." When Noah was shut up in the ark—Noah and the favoured few—you know how they were tossed about, the rains coming down from heaven, the waters rushing and dashing below. The windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and while they were thus dashed upon the waters not a drop came in unto them that were within. "It shall not come nigh thee." So you see the believer may be surrounded by these troubles, and yet "it shall not come nigh thee." And there is something more in the expression used in reference to the making of the ark: "And shall pitch it within and without with pitch." (Gen. 6:14.) Now, it is a most remarkable fact that the word pitch in Hebrew (the word is *Gopher*) signifies also *atonement*. Now see, the slime or pitch with which it was daubed within and without kept every drop of water out. Now, this very expression for slime or pitch in the Hebrew signifies also atonement; and is it not the atonement that keeps out the water? Is it anything but the atonement that can keep the soul from the waters of God's wrath and from the floods of vengeance that shall sweep away the world with the ungodly? It is nothing but the atonement. It bears them up and keeps out every drop of rain. "It shall not come nigh thee." "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass him about." (Psa. 32:10.) "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. 5:11.) "Received the atonement." This is it, to have the "atonement." God cannot exact payment twice

for the debt. He is satisfied, he has declared that he is well pleased with the righteousness of his beloved Son. He exacts no more; his justice demands no more; and, therefore, fury is not in him. "I will set him on high, I will honour him, and with long life will I satisfy him and will show him my salvation."

This seems to me to crown the whole; this seems—this blessing seems to be the very topstone in this building. "With long life will I satisfy him." Now, what does it promise him? Does it mean that every child of God shall live to be eighty or ninety years of age? No such thing. It does not mean that; and just think for a moment: let a man live to be ninety and is he content with his age? Is he satisfied? No. There is that in poor human nature that ever shrinks from death, and however long we may live we would still live longer. It is not in the number of our years that we shall find preparedness for death. It is not the longer a man lives the more will he be satisfied. No such thing. Then, what can it mean? Why, that God will satisfy his people with their length of life, whether long or short. Suppose the Lord had wrought these things that I have been speaking of in the soul of an individual, and that individual has not numbered more than twenty years, and yet the time has come when he shall be gathered home. The Lord does not gather him home without satisfying him. He is satisfied with the length of his life. You will not find a child of God on this deathbed mourning and crying because he has not got many more years to live. No; the Lord prepares when he visits the soul with his salvation; and that soul longs to be with Christ; which is far better than being here. The Lord does not gather his fruit until it is ripe, and you know naturally that a crop is not ripe all at once. Even upon one tree I have known some of the fruit to be ripe weeks before the rest. And then there are some fruits that ripen in the summer time, some in the autumn, and some on

the borders of winter. And see, when you touch a ripe pear it will drop into your hands with the touch. So the Lord gathers his fruit when it is ripe, and it is ripe whether he gathers it in July or August; it is ripe. It does not follow that all the fruit shall be gathered in October. No such thing. God takes his children home at all ages, and he always satisfies them. He always brings them to see and feel that this life is empty and vain, and that it is better, far better, to live in his presence. And then, again, "with long life will I satisfy him." Why, this long life may refer to eternal life, and it is eternal life he enters upon when he leaves this vale of tears. He enters upon a better state of being. He begins to live indeed. He now can rejoice in the very presence of God with no sin, no death, with nothing to burden or cast him down, no temptations from the enemy, no more cross, no more sin, no more sorrow. It is now all life and peace and joy and rest, and that eternal. "With long life will I satisfy him." We read of wisdom having "length of days in her right hand and in her left hand riches and honour;" (Prov. 3:16) and, indeed, there is, and if a man or a partaker of grace is taken to glory that child is brought to feel that he has lived long enough. And does not the Lord say, "One day with the Lord is as a thousand, and a thousand as one day;" and that the child shall die a hundred years old, and so it is.

"With long life will I satisfy him." You may be harassed by the thoughts of death, and be in bondage through the fears of death; and you may be saying, "How will it be with me then?" I will tell you. If you are a child of God I firmly believe you will not be removed unwillingly and reluctantly, but you will be willing in the day of the Lord's power. (Psa. 110:3.) You will be willing to breathe out your soul into his dear hands, to whom you will commend your spirit; you will be willing to be with Christ, which is far better. (Phil. 1:23.) You may not now be willing. If you pluck at an unripe apple it

resists the touch, but let it be fully ripe, and how little, how slight a touch will cause it to drop from the tree. You shall be gathered as a shock of corn in its season. Why, a farmer will not gather in his corn until it is fully ripe; and do you think the Lord will gather his corn into his heavenly garner and it be in an unfit and unripe state? We cannot think it. Be that thought far from us, as it is far from the Lord.

"With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." Ah! he will never see it except the Lord shows him it; but the Lord will show it him. He says he will: "I will show him my salvation." What can he want more? All that he may want, all that he may need in his journey through this wilderness is there. Is there not a sufficiency there? Is there not that which he feels is enough? If these promises be mine, be yours, and if these promises be fulfilled to you and to me, what can we possibly want more? "I will answer him." What a mercy! "I will be with him in trouble"—actually with him; and then he will not feel the trouble. Why, the three children in the furnace did not feel the flame: it burnt the bonds but not them; no, nor did it even singe their hair. They were kept. They were under this safeguard—the Lord was with them.

"I will deliver him, I will set him on high, I will honour him." "Them that honour me I will honour." They may be despised, their name may be cast out as evil, they may be persecuted and hated; and why are they hated? They are hated because those who hate them have known neither the Father nor me, said Christ. That is why they hate me. Then, if we are hated for Christ's sake welcome scorn, welcome reproach. We "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. 11:26.)

"I will honour him, I will satisfy him with long life." He shall live as long as he wants to live. He shall not want to live an

hour longer than the Lord's, the Master's time, which is the best time. "He shall be satisfied" (that is he shall want nothing more), "and I will show him my salvation." Ah! may God grant that these precious words may have an abiding place in our hearts.

Mark you: these promises are in the future. "I will" do this, "I will" do that. We may look thus forward to the future, for the Lord will fulfil his words. God is faithful to his promises. Now, we may have had a foretaste of these things; and what shall this foretaste that we have experienced of these things do for us? Why, encourage us. He has been with us, and therefore he will be with us. He has delivered us, and therefore he will deliver us. He who has answered us in times past will still continue to answer. And what an encouragement for us still to call upon his name. He will do all these things for his people. May God grant to you and me to realize these rich blessings, these precious blessings, and set to our seal a hope and experience that God is true.