Life Lessons for Me from the Psalms

Aids to the Study of the Topic for March 7th.-Psalm xlvi.

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THE Book of Psalms is the hymn book of the Hebrew Church, and consists of five collections, as indicated in the Revised Versions, each collection or section closing the Revised Versions, each collection or section closing with a doxology. They are sometimes spoken of as the Psalms of David, although he wrote less than half of them, yet perhaps he wrote more than any other single author. Our Methodist hymn book is sometimes called the hymns of Wes'ey, although Charles Wesley wrote only a little more Wes'ey, although Charles Wesley wrote only a little more than half of the hymns in our hymn book, viz., 552, out of the whole number. As Chas. Wesley was the sweet singer of Methodism, so David was the sweet singer of Israel. As Solomon was the patron saint of wisdom among the Hebrews,

Solomon was the patron saint of wiscom among the Heorews, so David was their patron saint of muslc.

Among the Israelites these psalms held a place and exerted an influence similar to that of the folk-songs of other nations. All nations have had their popular songs. We find nations. All nations have had their popular songs. We find in every nation popular rhymes or folk-song, ranging all the way from the nursery rhymes like, "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake," which is taught to our children, up to the national anthem, which everybody sings. At a time when the art of printing was unknown, and but few men could read or write, the was unknown, and but few men could read or write, the history of the past was taught to the people in the form of hero-songs or folk-lore, often put into rhyme, which passed hero-songs or folk-lore, often put into rhyme, which passed from lip to lip, and were sung, or recited, by all. English history affords many examples of this. In the fourteenth century, the peasants under the leadership of John Ball and Vat Tyler, rose up in rebellion against the wealthy land-owners and rulling artistic to the common people began to assert their rights, and their doctrines were passed from lip to lip in popular songs of a rude character, such as,

When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then a gentleman,'

being a popular rhyme, in which they taught the doctrine of the equality of man.

As these folk-songs exerted a wonderful influence over the thought and life of the people, so did the psalms exert a great influence over the thought and life of the Israelites. But more influential were these psalms, and of a higher and nut more innuential were these psaims, and of a nighter and nobler character, than were the folk-song of our Celtic and Anglo-Saxon ancestors; for the psalms touched the religious side of the life of the people. While on the one hand the sentiment of these psalms grew out of the life of the people, on the other, they were built up into their character.

It is sometimes asserted that in the Prophets God speaks to man, and in the Psalms man speaks to God. But this disto man, and in the Psaims man speaks to God. But this dis-tinction must not be pressed too far, for in the Psaims, also, God speaks to man. In what more effective way could God speak to man than through his own experiences. God speaks to men through their tears and laughter, their hopes and joys, their trials and struggles, and these experiences are

woven into the Psalms

The Historical Books of the Bible, from Genesis to Nehemiah, give us a record of the things that happened to the Israelites; the Psalms give us a record of the things that happened within them, that is, a record of their own inward happened within them, that is, a record of their own inward experience. The Historical Books-contain a record of their doings; the Prophecies, a record of their preaching; the Wisdom Books a record of their thinking; and the Psaims, a record of their feelings. The Psaims not only reflect the experience of the Hebrews, but they likewise faithfully reflect our own experience. Here is a mirror which reflects our own

what is the dominant note in the experience of God's ancient people as we find it reflected in these sacred songs?

Is it not

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD?

The Jews were a religious people; they recognized God's presence in every event; they sought His presence in every experience. The language of their heart was,

"As the heart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

The psalm which has been chosen as the basis of our lesson emphasizes the experience of God's presence in time of need. This doctrine is set forth in the first couplet,

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble."

And this precious thought is again expressed in the refrain, three times repeated,

"Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge." The psalm naturally divides into three parts, and it is

The psalm naturally divides into three parts, and it is probable that the refrain should be supplied at the end of verse three, thus making the symmetry of the psalm complete. The first strophe (1-3) shows us God present to help in the face of the fierce doings of nature. The wind, the lightning, the flood, the earthquake, may do their worst, yet lightning, the flood, the earthquake, may do their worst, yet will we not fear, for God is present with us. God can so control the forces of nature that they will be conductive to man's welfare. For the Psalmist's view of God's presence in ature see certain other psalms. Ruskin says that the 104th psalm anticipated all the discoveries of modern science. The pain anticipated all the discoveries of modern science. The second strophe (4-7) asserts the continued presence of God with His people, giving them perfect peace. Even though the earth quakes and the nations rage, yet they will not be agitated, for God is in the midst of them. In the third strophe (8-11) we see the power of God actually overcoming the enemies of His people. He breaks their bow, He burns their chariots, He brings the war to an end. Perhaps the Psalmist here refers to Israel's signal victory over Sennaberlib, recorded in II. Kings, xix. The student will do well to study this psalm in the light of that deliverance. The Israelites recognized the hand of God in history. It was God Who fought for them, Who wrought their deliverance, Who directed their footsteps, Who chose their kings, Who called their prophets, Who punished the evildoer, Who chastised His own, Who succored the needy, and Who blessed the righteous.

the righteous.

This psalm, like many others, has exerted a powerful influence in encouraging God's people in time of trouble. It was a source of inspiration to Martin Luther. When Luther would sometimes feel downcast because of the oppression of the enemy, he would say to his co-laborer, Philip Melanchton, "Come, Philip, let us sing the 46th Psalm"; and the two friends would sing it in Luther's version, a translation of which we have in that soul-stirring hymn, number 506 in our hymn book. Oliver Cromwell used to call this Luther's psalm, and by preaching from it he would encourage his soldiers, telling them that it was a rare psalm for a Christian. By preaching from the words of this psalm, Rev. George Walker encouraged the starving garrison of Londorerry when it was besleged by the enemy in 1689. When derry when it was besieged by the enemy in 1689. When the garrison was reduced to little more than one-half its original numbers, and many of the survivors were incapable on account of sickness and wounds; when nearly every living on account of sickness and woulds; when hearly every firing thing in the shape of horse, dog, cat, rat, or mouse and even weeds, had been used up for food; when starvation and death stared them in the face, they were still able by faith to lift

their faces Godwards, and say,

"The Lord of Hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge."

John Wesley and his co-workers were conscious of the presence of God, and he used to say, "The best of all is, God is with us." This saying he repeated on his dying bed. A little while after he said,

"The Lord of Hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge."

Throughout the night he was heard attempting to repeat these words, and in the morning he was with God.
We, too, need the presence of God, not so much to protect

us against the forces of nature or the hand of man, for these us against the forces of nature or the hand of man, for these forces, however mallcious at times, cannot injure our character; but, rather, we need His presence to protect us against that spirit of evil which is able to mar our character. (See Eph. vi., 10-12.) We need His presence to inspire us to holy living, to noble doing, to a life of self-sacrificing love. When living, to noble doing, to a life of self-saterineing love. When throubles oppress, when temptations allure, when duty calls, when difficulties baffle, when strength and wisdom fall us, then let us seek the Lord as our Helper. Let us seek to experience His presence in our hearts, and to practice His presence in our lives.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY.

What splendid hymns in our hymn book are based on the

Is any member of the League prepared to recite any par-ticular psalm, say the i., or xxiii, or xxxii., or cxxi., or xivi., or any other?

Which is your favorite psalm? and why? Quote a favorite

Can you find in the psalms a suitable passage which expresses your consecration to God?

Lynedoch, Ont.