

Many little boys and girls will remember that the great kingdom which David ruled over was, soon after the death of King Solomon, divided into two parts, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah; and that, in course of time, the former became so wicked that God gave them up to their enemies, by whom they were carried away into captivity. The kings of Judah, too, were, many of them, idolaters, and led their people into all sorts of wickedness. But after a time there reigned in Jerusalem a good king named Hezekiah, and he thought he would try and get the people to leave off their bad ways and to serve God again according to their own law, and, among other things, he resolved to have a Passover kept once more, for, so far as we can discover, it had not been kept at all for about 250 years. So he had the temple cleansed, and the priests and Levites purified, and the singers called together, and great preparations made to have a most happy and joyful time. But then, he thought, what a pity that the Israelites, some of whom had been left in their own countries, would not leave their filthy idols and come too, just as they used to in King David's time. So he sent letters both to them and to his own people the Jews, urging them to come. But a great many of them had grown quite as bad as the heathen, and they just mocked and scoffed at the good king's invitation. There were others, however, who were faithful and as much as for their dear old temple and its worship, and they came most gladly. You can fancy them thinking as they came to this feast the very words of this beautiful psalm which some one wrote just as you see it here, and which was sung in the temple, probably, at that very feast.

LESSON TALK.

- 1st. The house of the Lord, verses 1, 2, 3.
2nd. The blessed people, "4, 5, 6, 7."
3rd. A prayer, 8, 9, 10, 11.
4th. A choice, and three reasons, 12, 13, 14.

Verse 1. This is addressed to God. Amiable, pleasant, worthy to be loved. Tabernacles (plural)—those parts of the temple where God manifested His presence in a special way, as the Holy of Holies, or temple within the veil, and the outer hall, or Holy place. In Heb. 9:2, 3, the latter is called the first tabernacle, and the former the tabernacle.

Verse 2. My soul . . . my flesh,—that is, soul and body, or the entire mental and physical being. Longeth, fainteth, crieth out,—that is, desires above everything else—what? The living God and His house.

Verse 3. We must not understand that sparrows and swallows had made their nest in God's temple at Jerusalem. Here is a reading of this verse which makes the sense very plain and beautiful. "As the sparrow findeth a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, so findeth my soul Thine altars." Here is yet another. "Even as the sparrow finds out (seeks) a house, and the swallow her nest, in which she may hatch her young, so I, thine altars, O Lord, my King and my God!" How great the psalmist's longing must have been, to justify such a very strong comparison.

Verse 4. Blessed are they,—they that dwell in—have their home in—God's house. Why? They can be all the time praising—worshipping and serving—God.

Verse 5. Whose strength is in Thee,—in God. How strong does God make those that wait upon Him? Read Isaiah 40: 31. In whose heart are the ways,—or, "the highways are in their hearts,"—meaning, probably, the roads leading to the temple. They would love even the roads leading to God's house.

Verse 6. Of Baca,—probably a real valley having many bitter trees growing in it, though, which many going up to the temple would have to pass. Rain,—possibly a figurative expression for tears of joy at drawing near their beloved Jerusalem.

Verse 7. From strength to strength,—all the time growing stronger in love, and confidence, and joy, as they draw nearer God's house, which they at length reach, and each takes his place before God in Zion.

3rd.

Verse 8. Hear, give ear,—that is, be pleased to listen to me. This is the substance of this beautiful prayer. O Lord, of Hosts, the God of Jacob, our (Verse 9) Shield, hear my prayer! Behold, look upon the face of thine anointed (Christ) in whom I trust. Bring me to Thy house and (Verse 10) let me dwell there, for a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand anywhere else, (Verse 12) O Lord, bless! indeed it the man that trusts in Thee.

4th.

Verse 10. A CHOICE. To be a door-keeper in God's house rather than dwell in the tents—palaces, rich dwellings—of the wicked. Reasons, Verse 11. 1st, Because God is a SUN. The sun gives light by which we see things aright; gives warmth, without which there is no life; gives beauty, and growth, and bodily vigor. God illumines our minds so that we see (understand) what He teaches us. He warms our cold hearts with His love—that is, gives us a new life; He makes our spirits beautiful—that is, Christ-like; He makes us grow strong and vigorous Christians, and therefore useful and happy.

2nd, God is a SHIELD. A shield is what a soldier holds between himself and his enemy, to keep from being hurt. So God is a Shield to the blessed people, always standing between them and their deadly enemies.

3rd, God keeps back no good thing from the blessed people; perhaps not just what they think is good, for then He would be giving them a great many very bad things, but such things as He knows are good for them.

Now, dear children, is not one day with God for a SUN, to give you grace and glory; and with God for a SHIELD, to give you perfect protection; and with God for a PROVIDER, to give you freely everything that is really good for you, though you should be only door-keepers in His house, better than a thousand days anywhere else? I think so; and if one day in God's house on earth is worth so much, oh, think what must heaven be!—and how blessed must be all they who trust in God!

March 23.—The All-Seeing God.—Psalm

139: 1-12. Golden Text, Gen. 16: 13.

LESSON BASIS.

The things contained in this Psalm are true,—
When?—At all times.
Where?—In all places.

Of Whom?—Of God; they could be true of no one else.

They are—What?—Declarations of God's Omnipotence and Omniscience. To impress with the greatness of God, and the relation of His attributes to ourselves.

LESSON TALK.

We can give no history of this Psalm or its author. It is called a Psalm of David; but it is not very likely that David wrote it. Probably it was written by some one—quite possibly one of the prophets—who had been with the captives in Babylon; but we have no means of knowing who it was—whether prophet, priest, or singer. It is a Psalm that any little child may understand, with suitable explanations, and in which he is sure to be interested; and yet it contains some of the grandest truths concerning God that are found in the Bible.

In this lesson there are three great truths taught: 1st. God knows all about us. Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

2nd. God is in every place to which we may go, or think of going. Verses 7, 8, 9, 10.

3rd. There is nothing can hide us from God's sight. V. 11, 12.

IST. GOD KNOWS.

V. 1. Thou hast searched me.—God has done it; not He, but He has; so He knows us even better than we know ourselves. We cannot see our hearts beating, or our blood flowing, or ten thousand other things going on within our bodies; but God sees them, for He has searched us through and through, and there is nothing, either in our bodies or minds, that He does not know perfectly.

V. 2. How many things are named in this verse? Three—our sitting down, our rising up, and what we are thinking about. "What!" says some little boy or girl, "does God know such little things as those?" Yes, dear child, and even the tiny, little thoughts that come and go in your mind—some of them bad ones too—God reads them more plainly than you could read a printed book. God knows them *after* that, that is, when they are *over*; but He knows *your* mind *before*.

V. 3. Compasseth my path—that is, He classifies your paths as right or wrong paths, bad or good paths, and even your lying down God knows. All your ways, too—pleasant ways, naughty ways, angry ways, kind ways, selfish or rude or gentle ways. God knows all about them every one.

V. 4. Word—every one, good or bad, true or false, kind or unkind, God knows; and what is very dreadful, does not forget! Read Matt. xii: 34.

V. 5. Here is a reading of this verse, beginning with the word *Le*, in the 4th verse. "Behold, thou, O Jehovah, knowest the whole heart"—the hereafter and the past! Thou hast formed me and laid thy hand upon me,"—that is, God knows all that has been in the past and all that will be in the future that concerns us. Nothing ever has happened to us, or ever will be that He does not know. Read Heb. i: 13. Laid thy hand upon me—that is, God's forming hand has been placed upon us really and truly. Read Acts xvii: 28.

V. 6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me—it is far, far greater than I can understand. There are very few things that even the wisest men quite understand. They cannot tell you the way a blade of grass grows in the field, the way a leaf grows on a tree, or the way a hair grows on their own heads. So it is no great wonder that one should not understand this amazing knowledge of God. It is indeed, even vastly too high for any body to climb up to.

2ND. GOD IS IN EVERY PLACE.

V. 7. Whither shall I go? Whither shall I flee?—that is how shall I get away from God? "Surely," says the wicked man, "there is some place I can hide in, where He will not find me!" No, no, wicked man, indeed there is not! I may search and hunt till you are tired out, but you will not find one.

V. 8. If I ascend, etc. But you cannot climb up to heaven. You may stretch your arms, and try ever so much, but you cannot get there, and if you could, God is there as truly as here. He made the sun, the moon, and the stars; and there is not one among them all where He is not. Even in hell—that awful, awful place you cannot escape from God, for He is there as well as here.

V. 9. Does he think he'll ask the morning to take him up on its beautiful wings, and carry him away, away to the far off ocean? Why, if the morning could speak, she'd shake her head sadly, and say, "Oh, no, no, I've never seen the sea, or oceans there are, but God is in every one—it's no use for you to go there. You will be sure to find Him."

V. 10. You would find His hand there to lead you, and His strong right hand to hold you fast,