

years of the return, "while the sense of the nation's forgiveness, of which that deliverance was the proof, was still fresh and vivid." The psalm is one of singular beauty. Its tenderness, its trustfulness, its hopefulness, anticipate the spirit of the New Testament. It does not contain one jarring note, and it furnishes fit language of thanksgiving for the greater blessings of a more marvelous redemption than that of Israel from Babylon.

I. The Psalmist's Call to His Soul, 1-5.

Vs. 1, 2. *Bless the Lord.* We "bless" God when we praise, extol, or glorify him as the giver of benefits, with thankful acknowledgment of benefits received. *O my soul*; the psalmist's entire self or personality. *All . . . within me*; the various organs of the body regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of thought and will and emotion. *His holy name.* God's "name" includes the outward expression of all that he is,—his goodness, his character, his attributes. Just as when a man signs a note, all that he is and has stands back of the signature, so behind God's "name" he himself stands in all his fulness and glory. *Forget not.* The psalmist realizes that memory is apt to keep short-lived records of mercies, especially when these are continually being received. *All his benefits.* "God's gifts are all 'benefits,' whether they are bright or dark." (Maclaren.)

Vs. 3-5. *Who forgiveth.* The first benefit is forgiveness, which clears the way for all other blessings to come from heaven. *Iniquities*; crookedness, perversity. *Who healeth*; not only bodily ailments, but the deeper sickness of sin. *Who redeemeth*; brings back, as a slave is brought back from bondage. *From destruction*; literally "from the pit," that is, "the grave." The restoration from Babylon was a bringing back of the nation from death to life, in which each member of it had a personal share. *Who crowneth thee*, etc.; makes his children kings, and weaves their crown out of his own glorious attributes of loving kindness and tender mercies. *Who satisfieth thy mouth*, etc. It is through the mouth that things are given which satisfy hunger; so God satisfies the soul. *Youth . . . renewed*; by receiving continual supplies of strength and vigor. *Like the eagle*; the bird of highest flight and keenest vision.

II. The Psalmist's Picture of God, 6-18.

Vs. 6-10. *Execute righteous acts* (Rev. Ver.). The Hebrew word is plural to denote the many acts in which God had shown his righteousness. *Judgments for all . . . oppressed* (Rev. Ver.); as in the deliverance of his people from Babylon. This is regarded as a judgment upon the oppressors. *His ways unto Moses . . . acts unto the children of Israel.* From the story of Moses and the Israelites of whom he was the leader, we learn the principles on which God deals with mankind. *Merciful*; eager to pardon the guiltiest sinner. *Gracious*; full of kindness to the most unworthy. *Slow to anger*; literally, "long of anger"; that is, slow to let it flash out in judgment. *Plenteous in mercy*; as lavish of lovingkindness as he is sparing of wrath. *Will not always chide.* The Lord will rebuke people for their sins, and punish them, if need be, but he will not be always chastising and condemning like a hard taskmaster. *Neither . . . keep his anger*, etc. His anger is like the lightning, transient; his kindness like the sunshine, constant. *Not . . . after our sins, nor . . . according to our iniquities.* God's heaviest punishment is light compared with the weight of our sins.

Vs. 11-14. *Heaven is high above the earth*; the greatest height conceivable (compare Isa. 55 : 8, 9). *So great* (mighty in its reach from heaven to earth) *is his mercy.* *Toward them that fear him*; the true Israelites. *East . . . from the west*; sunrise from sunset, the utmost conceivable distance in breadth. *Removed our transgressions*; to the very bounds of the universe. *Like as a father*; who loves his children. *The Lord pitieth.* "A pitying God! Nothing can be added to that." (Maclaren.) *Them that fear him*; and only those. God's blessings are universal; but it is possible to shut oneself out from them. *Knoweth our frame*; because he formed it, Gen. 2 : 7. *Remembereth that we are dust*; frail and doomed to perish.

Vs. 15-18. *As for man.* What follows is true of all mankind. *His days*; his life. *As grass*; quickly withering under the hot Eastern sun. *As a flower*; beautiful for a time, but doomed soon to perish. *The wind passeth over it*; the scorching, withering south wind. *The mercy of the Lord*; and that is