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THE NINETY-FIRST PSALM

THIS PSALM might have been written by Moses after some terrible calamity had come upon the children of Israel. It might have been after that terrible night of death in Egypt, when the first-born from the palace to the hovel were slain; or after that terrible plague of fiery serpents in the wilderness, when the people were full of fear and in a nervous state. In the Western states, where they have terrible cyclones, the people, old and young, get very nervous, and whenever they see a cloud coming up, they are alarmed. I was in Iowa some time ago, after they had had in that state seven cyclones, one right after another. They had been all around the city that I was in, and if a storm came up and the black clouds began to gather, the whole city was just trembling.

Perhaps Moses called Aaron and Miriam, and Joshua and Caleb, and a few others into his tent and read this psalm to them first. How sweet it must have sounded, and how strange!

*The last address delivered by D. L. Moody
on Round Top, where his body now lies
awaiting the resurrection*

I can imagine Moses asking, "Do you think that will help them? Will that quiet them?" and they all thought that it would. And then, (it may be), on one of those hilltops of Sinai, at twilight, this psalm was read. How it must have soothed them, how it must have helped them, how it must have strengthened them!

You will notice in the last two verses there are seven things that God told Moses He would do, seven "I wills." If they could get burned down into our souls, it would be a help to us all through life. When God says He will do a thing, there is no power on earth or in perdition that can keep Him from doing that which He has promised to do.

I. "I WILL DELIVER"

First, "I will deliver." When God called Moses to go down into Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, in all the world there wasn't a man who, humanly speaking, was less qualified than Moses. He had made the attempt once before to deliver the children of Israel, and he began by delivering one man. He failed in that, and killed an Egyptian, and had to run off into the desert, and stay there forty years. He had tried to deliver the Hebrews in his own way, he was working in his own strength and doing it in the energy of the flesh. He had all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but that didn't help him. He had to be taken back into Horeb, and kept there forty years in the school of God, before God could trust him to deliver the children of Israel in God's way. Then God came to

him and said, "I have come down to deliver," and when God worked through Moses three million were delivered as easy as I can turn my hand over. God could do it. It was no trouble when God came on the scene.

Learn the lesson. If we want to be delivered, from every inward and outward foe, we must look to a higher source than ourselves. We cannot do it in our own strength.

We all have some weak point in our character. When we would go forward, it drags us back, and when we would rise up into higher spheres of usefulness and the atmosphere of heaven, something drags us down. Now I have no sympathy with the idea that God puts us behind the blood and saves us, and then leaves us in Egypt to be under the old taskmaster. I believe God brings us out of Egypt into the promised land, and that it is the privilege of every child of God to be delivered from every foe, from every besetting sin.

If there is some sin that is getting the mastery over you, you certainly cannot be useful. You certainly cannot bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God until you get self-control. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." If we haven't got victory over jealousy, over envy, over self-seeking and covetousness and worldly amusements and worldly pleasure, if we are not delivered from all these things, we are not going to have power with God or with men, and we are not going to be as useful as we might be if we got deliverance from every evil. There isn't an evil within or without but what He will de-

liver us from if we will let Him. That is what He wants to do. As God said to Moses, "I have come down to deliver." If He could deliver three million slaves from the hands of the mightiest monarch on earth, don't you think He can deliver us from every besetting sin, and give us complete victory over ourselves, over our temper, over our dispositions, over our irritableness and peevishness and snappishness? If we want it and desire it above everything else, we can get victory.

People are apt to think that these little things (as we call them) are weaknesses that we are not responsible for; that they are misfortunes, that we inherited them. I have heard people talk about their temper. They say,

"Well, I inherited it from my father and mother; they were quick-tempered, and I got it from them."

Well, that is a poor place to hide, my friend. Grace ought to deliver us from all those things.

A lady came to me some time ago and said she had great trouble with her temper now, and she was more irritable than she was five years ago, and she wanted to know if I didn't think it was wrong.

I said, "I should think you are backsliding. If you haven't better control over yourself now than you had five years ago, there is something radically wrong."

"Well," she said, "I should like to know how I am going to mend it. Can you tell me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

I said, "When you get angry with people and give them a good scolding, go right to them after you have made up your mind that you have done wrong, and

tell them you have sinned and ask them to forgive you."

She said she wouldn't like to do that.

Of course she wouldn't; but she will never get victory until she treats it as sin. Don't look upon it as weakness or misfortune, but SIN. No child of God ought to lose control of temper without confessing it.

A lady came to me some time ago and said that she had got so in the habit of exaggerating that people accused her of misrepresentation. She wanted to know if there was any way she could overcome it.

"Certainly," I said.

"How?"

"Next time you catch yourself at it, go right to the party and tell them you lied."

"Oh!" she said, "I wouldn't like to call it lying."

Of course not, but a lie is a lie all the same, and you will never overcome those sins until you treat them as sins and get them out of your nature. If you want to shine in the light of God and be useful, you must overcome, you must be delivered. And that is what God says He will do; He will deliver.

II. "I WILL ANSWER"

Now, the next "I will":—"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him."

There is a chance for all of us to call. The great God that made heaven and earth has promised, "I will answer his call." If you call on God for deliverance and for victory over sin and every evil, God isn't going to turn a deaf ear to your call. I don't care how black your life has been, I don't care what your past

record has been, I don't care how disobedient you have been, I don't care how you have backslidden and wandered; if you really want to come back, God accepts the willing mind, God will hear your prayer, and answer.

Listen to the prodigal: "Father, I have sinned!" That was enough; the father took him right to his bosom. The past was blotted out at once. Look at the men on the day of Pentecost. Their hands were dripping with the blood of the Son of God; they had murdered Jesus Christ. And what did Peter say to them? "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Look at the penitent thief. It might have been that when a little boy, his mother taught him that same passage in Joel, "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." As he hung there on the cross, it flashed into his mind that this was the Lord of glory, and though he was on the very borders of hell, he cried out, "Lord, remember me," and the answer came right then and there, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." In the morning associated with thieves; in the evening, associated with the purest of heaven. In the morning, cursing—Matthew and Mark both tell us that those two thieves came out cursing; in the evening, uplifted on high, an inhabitant of heaven. In the morning, as black as hell could make him; in the evening, not a spot or wrinkle. Why? Because he took God at His word.

My dear friend, if you are unsaved, you just call upon God now, and here is a promise, "I will answer his call."

A few years ago an old returned missionary went to one of our leading hospitals to have a surgical operation performed. He was to go under ether, and it was doubtful whether he would come out or not; he might wake up in another world. He bade adieu to his friends, gave them his farewell blessing—he was a very godly man—and when the doctor said, “Well, we are ready,” he faced them, and with a calm look, he said:

“Would you just wait a minute?”

Then he lifted his voice in prayer—

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Then, opening his eyes, he said, “Doctor, I am ready,” and passed under the knife, and out from under it into health.

My dear friends, it is a sweet privilege to pray; it is a sweet privilege to be in touch with heaven, to be in communion with the great God that made heaven and earth. “I will answer his call.”

I suppose there isn't a Christian in this audience but can say Amen to that. You can say God has answered in the past, and you believe He will do so again.

Some people say they can't call. Perhaps you cannot make an eloquent prayer—I hope you can't—I have heard about all the eloquent prayers I want to hear. You can say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Only be sincere, and God will hear you cry. Mark

you, there is a sham cry. Mothers understand that; they know when their children cry in earnest, or whether it is a sham cry. Let the child give a real cry of distress, and the mother will leave everything and fly to her child. I have been forty years in Christian work, and I have never known God to disappoint any man or woman who was in earnest about their soul's salvation. I know lots of people who pretend to be in earnest, but their prayers are never answered.

III. "I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE"

Every heart knows its own bitterness. If the troubles that are represented by this audience could be written in a volume, it would take the biggest volume you have ever seen. We are apt to think that young people do not have any trouble, but if they haven't, there is one thing they can make sure of, that they are going to have trouble later. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Trouble is coming. No one is exempt. God has had one Son without sin, but He has never had one without sorrow. Jesus Christ, our Master, suffered as few men ever suffered, and He died very young. Ours is a path of sorrow and suffering, and it is so sweet to hear the Master say:

"I will be with you in trouble."

Don't let any one think for a moment that you can get on without Him. You may say now, "I can get on; I am in good health and prosperity," but the hour is coming when you will need Him.

Many a Christian could bear witness to this point, that He has been with them in trouble, that in some dark hour when the billows seemed to be rolling up

around them, they cried to Him, and He heard their cry, He answered their prayer, and He brought peace. There was joy in their sorrow, there was a star that lit up even the darkest night.

I remember being on that vessel, the *Spree*, when the shaft broke and a hole was knocked in her bottom out in mid-ocean, and the stern sank thirty feet. All my family but one was in Northfield, and I was making my way home, leaving friends in Europe. There I was in mid-ocean, pulled up, as it were, to look into my own grave for about forty-eight hours, without one ray of hope, humanly speaking. For forty-eight hours the burden was intense. My heart was like a lump of lead.

The accident happened Saturday morning. Sunday afternoon we had a prayer meeting, and after prayer I read this ninety-first Psalm. If it had been let down from heaven, it could not have given more comfort. I went into my state room, and I fell on my knees, and I cried to the Lord:

“It is a time of trouble; help me.”

And God took the burden. It rolled off, and I fell asleep. I never slept sounder than I did that night, and all the rest of the time. If a storm had burst on us any time during the week, we would have gone down, but God was with us in the time of trouble, and the burden was lifted.

A great many people seem to embalm their troubles. I always feel like running away when I see them coming. They bring out their old mummy, and tell you in a sad voice:

“You don’t know the troubles I have!”

My friends, if you go to the Lord with your troubles, He will take them away. Would you not rather be with the Lord and get rid of your troubles, than be with your troubles and without God? Let trouble come if it will drive us nearer to God.

It is a great thing to have a place of resort in the time of trouble. How people get on without the God of the Bible is a mystery to me. If I didn't have such a refuge, a place to go and pour out my heart to God in such times, I don't know what I would do. It seems as if I would go out of my mind. But to think, when the heart is burdened, we can go and pour it into His ear, and then have the answer come back, "I will be with him," there is comfort in that!

I thank God for the old Book. I thank God for this old promise. It is as sweet and fresh today as it has ever been. Thank God, none of those promises are out of date, or grown stale. They are as fresh and vigorous and young and sweet as ever.

IV. "I WILL HONOR HIM"

"I will honor him." God's honor is something worth seeking. Man's honor doesn't amount to much. Suppose Moses had stopped down there in Egypt. He would have been loaded down with Egyptian titles, but they would never have reached us. Suppose he had been Chief Marshal of the whole Egyptian army, "General" Moses, "Commander" Moses; suppose he had reached the throne and become one of those Pharaohs, and his mummy had come down to our day. What is that compared with the honor God put upon him?

“I will honor him.” Didn’t God put honor on Moses? How his name shines on the page of history! The honor of this world doesn’t last; it is transient; it is passing away, and I don’t believe any man or woman is fit for God’s service that is looking for worldly preferment, worldly honors and worldly fame. Let us get it under our feet, let us rise above it, and seek the honor that comes down from above.

V. “WITH LONG LIFE WILL I SATISFY HIM”

“With long life will I satisfy him.” I get a good deal of comfort out of that promise. I don’t think that means a short life down here, seventy years, eighty years, ninety years, or one hundred years. Do you think that any man living would be satisfied if they could live to be one hundred years old and then have to die? Not by a good deal. Suppose Adam had lived until today and had to die tonight, would he be satisfied? Not a bit of it! Not if he had lived a million years, and then had to die.

You know we are all the time coming to the end of things here,—the end of the week, the end of the month, the end of the year, the end of school days. It is end, end, end all the time. But, thank God, He is going to satisfy us with long life; no end to it, an endless life.

Life is very sweet. I never liked death; I like life. It would be a pretty dark world if death was eternal, and when our loved ones die we are to be eternally separated from them. Thank God, it is not so; we shall be re-united. It is just moving out of this house

into a better one; stepping up higher, and living on and on forever.

There is a verse—probably you have never noticed it—that came to me with great sweetness some time ago. It is in the 21st Psalm, the 4th verse: “He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days forever and ever.” Think of that, length of days *forever and ever!*

Do you think Moses is dead yet?

He never lived as he does today, never; and he is going to live on and on forever. What does Christ say? “If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death.” Never!

Don't you want to live forever? You can if you will. Eternal life is as free as the air that you and I take into our lungs. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Yes, “I will satisfy him with long life.”

Is there any one here who hasn't got eternal life? I don't like to pass over this, and leave any one outside the kingdom. If you are not in, my friend, take my advice; don't eat, or drink, or sleep until you get eternal life. Then this body may be taken away, but if it is, you will make something out of death. “If our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

When a young man, I was called upon suddenly, in Chicago, to preach a funeral sermon. A good many

Chicago business men were to be there, and I said to myself,

“Now, it will be a good chance for me to preach the gospel to those men, and I will get one of Christ’s funeral sermons.”

I hunted all through the four Gospels trying to find one of Christ’s funeral sermons, but I couldn’t find any. I found He broke up every funeral He ever attended! He never preached a funeral sermon in the world. Death couldn’t exist where He was. When the dead heard His voice they sprang to life. He will smash up the undertaking business when He comes to reign. “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

The 23d Psalm is more misquoted than anything else in the whole Bible. It is known in all the Catholic churches; it is known in the Greek church; it is in the Jewish synagogue; they chant it in a great many denominations, burying the dead; and armies went to battle chanting the 23d Psalm. And yet I believe it is more misquoted than anything in the Bible. People will weave it into their prayers, and conversation, and chapel services. They will say, “Yea, though I walk through the dark valley.” They will always emphasize the word “dark,” and send the cold chills running down your back. “Yea, though I walk through the *dark* valley of the shadow of death.” I want to tell you, my dear friends, the word “dark” isn’t there at all. The devil sticks that in there to confuse believers. It is, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”

What is the difference?

Must not there be light where there is shadow? Can you get a shadow without light? If you doubt it, go down into the cellar tonight without a light, and find your shadow if you can. All that death can do to a true believer is to throw a shadow across his path. Shadows never hurt any one. You can walk right through shadows as you can through fog, and there is nothing to fear.

I pity down deep in my heart any man or woman that lives under the bondage of death! If you are under it, may God bring you out today! May you come right out into the liberty of the blessed gospel of the Son of God.

Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy death, and we can say with Paul, if we will, "Oh death, where is thy sting?" and we can hear a voice rolling down from heaven saying, "Buried in the bosom of the Son of God." He took death unto His own bosom. He went into the grave to conquer and overthrow it, and when He arose from the dead said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Thank God, we have a long life with Christ in glory.

My dear friends, if we are in Christ we are never going to die. Do you believe that? If sometime you should read that D. L. Moody, of East Northfield, is dead, don't believe a word of it. He has gone up higher, that is all; gone out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His own glorious body. Moses wouldn't have changed the body he had at the transfiguration for the

body he had at Pisgah. Elijah wouldn't have changed the body he had at the transfiguration for the body he had under the juniper tree. They got better bodies; and I too am going to make something out of death.

VI. "I WILL SET HIM ON HIGH"

"I will set him on high." God is able to do it. Up above the angels, up above the archangels, up above the cherubims and seraphims, on the throne with His own Son.

We are called to be sons and daughters of the eternal God. Do you know, the Prince of Wales cannot sit on the throne with the Queen; they wouldn't allow it. The heir to the throne of Russia could not sit on the throne with the Czar. But it is not so yonder. Christ has gone up and taken His seat at the right hand of the Father, and every son and daughter of God is to be lifted up onto the throne. My dear friends, think of the promise. Isn't it rich, isn't it sweet? "I will set him on high."

So that when our friends pass up to be on high and to be forever with Him, they are far better off.

VII. "I WILL SHOW HIM MY SALVATION"

"I will show him my salvation." That is a sweet promise. God can say to the angels—"Hark to that man that was once down in the depths, down in the gutter, but now he is lifted up and set upon my throne with my Son." Thank God for the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus!

I believe we don't learn the fringe of the subject of salvation down here. When our Master was on earth,

He said He had many more things to say, but He could not reveal them to His disciples because they were not ready to receive them. But when we go yonder, where these mortal bodies have put on immortality, when our spiritual faculties are loosed from the thralldom of the flesh, I believe we shall be able to take more in. God will lead us from glory to glory, and show us the fullness of our salvation. Don't you think Moses knew more at the Mount of Transfiguration than he did at Pisgah? Didn't Christ talk with him then about the death He was to accomplish at Jerusalem? He couldn't have received this truth before, any more than the disciples, but when he had received his glorified body, Christ could show him everything.