

God's Thoughts Toward Us

***“Many, O LORD my
God, are the
wonders which You
have done, And
Your thoughts
toward us; There is
none to compare
with You. If I
would declare and
speak of them,
They would be too
numerous to count.”***

***—Psalm 40:5, New
American Standard
Bible***

IN REVEALING HIS WILL

to consecrated believers of this Gospel age, the Heavenly Father has shown that he wants them to work for him in the carrying out of his plan. What a high honor it is to have this privilege. Jesus, in his prehuman existence, had this glorious opportunity in the original work of creation. For this reason we find God saying to him, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen. 1:26) It would

similarly be wonderful to have the Heavenly Father include us in his work. This is exactly what he has done, for as the apostle writes, we have been made co-laborers with the Lord in the great work of reconciling the lost world to him.—I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 5:18,19; 6:1

God has been zealous in the carrying out of his plan, and he is pleased when his co-laborers exhibit

a similar fervor—the zeal of the house of God. (Ps. 69:9) The true followers of the Master are described by Paul as a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14) James indicates that we are to show our faith by our works. (James 2:18) It is certainly pleasing to the Heavenly Father that we should rejoice in the privilege of working with him, and that we should delight at every evidence of his blessing upon our efforts.

While desiring to work for God, we should ever keep in mind that what we do for him is nothing in comparison with what he does for us. (I John 4:19) Indeed, it is only by his grace that our imperfect works would be acceptable to him at all. It is thus appropriate that we should pause and consider the many “wonders” which he has done, and his sincere, loving “thoughts toward us,” as spoken of in our opening text. When we do this, we find how true it is that the many things which the Lord has done are “too numerous to count.”

“HE INCLINED UNTO ME”

In the first verse of this Psalm, we read, “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” Throughout the ages many have waited patiently for God, but it was not his due time to incline unto them and hear their cry. Paul speaks of these as the “whole creation” which, groaning and travailing together in pain, are waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19,22) The Heavenly Father knows about all these millions. When, in his plan, their “day of visitation” comes, he will incline unto them, answer their cries for help, and save them. (I Pet. 2:12)

Then they will say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, ... we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”—Isa. 25:9

During the present Gospel Age, God has honored one here and one there by responding to their cry. Paul speaks of these as seeking the Lord, that they “might feel after him, and find him.” (Acts 17:27) It would be impossible for any to find the Lord unless he chooses to incline unto them and respond to their cry for help. If we have had this blessed experience, it means that God’s thoughts have turned “toward us,” and that we can accept this as a manifestation of his special favor.

When the Lord inclined toward us, the first of his “wonders” on our behalf is described by these words. “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.” (Ps. 40:2) We were all in this “horrible pit,” symbolic of our being lost in sin and death. We remember the pit into which Joseph was cast by his brethren. It was a place from which he could not have escaped. If his brothers had not changed their minds and sold Joseph as a slave, he would have died in that pit.

We were indeed in a pit condition, from which escape was impossible, and made the more so by the miry clay into which we were sinking. It was in this condition that God found us and heard our cry for help. He not only listened to our plea but took hold of us. He lifted us up out of the miry clay and out of the pit and set our feet upon a rock—“that Rock was Christ.” (I Cor. 10:4) Then we had a firm footing, a sure foundation, and joyfully we could sing praises to his name.

Additionally, God's thoughts toward us were manifested in other blessings. David writes that the Lord "established my goings"—that is, his course in life. This applies to us in the same way. While we were in the horrible pit, and our feet were sinking in the miry clay, life had very little purpose. The question probably often came into our minds concerning the meaning of our existence. We had no set objective, and we wavered from one thing to another. However, all this changed when God set our feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

Realizing that the Heavenly Father made a wonderful provision for us through Christ Jesus, our hearts responded in loving devotion to him. (Prov. 23:26) We realized that we no longer were our own, but belonged to God, and should spend the remainder of our lives serving him. (I Cor. 6:19,20) We consecrated ourselves to do his will, and in revealing his will to us, the Heavenly Father established our "goings." He pointed out not only what he wanted us to do in his service, but also that if "faithful unto death," we would receive "the prize of the high calling." (Rev. 2:10; Phil. 3:14) Thus, he encouraged us: "Set your affection on things above," and "Run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."—Col. 3:2; Heb. 12:1,2

How thankful we are that our Heavenly Father has established our goings. Life has abundant meaning, a definite objective and much for us to do. We are told, "work out your own salvation," for we know that God is working in us "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12,13) With our goings now established, we are admonished to

“give diligence” to make our “calling and election sure,” and with Paul, we say, “This one thing I do.” (II Pet. 1:10; Phil. 3:13) We hear Jesus saying to us daily, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” (Matt. 6:33) Hearing this, we realize that we cannot afford to be halfhearted in striving for the goal that is set before us in the Gospel. Moreover, we rejoice when we remember that it was God’s thoughts toward us that have resulted in our being in this position of high favor with him.

“A NEW SONG”

“He hath put a new song in my mouth,” the psalmist continues, “even praise unto our God.” (Ps. 40:3) The song in the mouths of most in the world today is a very sad one. It was also so with us until we were lifted out of that horrible pit. Indeed, we could not sing while our feet were sinking in the miry clay. However, now it is different. The Lord has given us a song to sing—one of praise to him. This “new song” is the melody of Truth. Various symbols are used in the Bible to help us comprehend the full meaning of the Gospel of Christ. It is food, described as “meat in due season.” (Matt. 24:45) It is “living water.” (John 4:10) It is “the armour of God.” (Eph. 6:11,13) It is the “light” with which the Heavenly Father has shined into our hearts.—II Cor. 4:6

The “new song” symbolism suggests the harmony of the various doctrines God’s plan, and the melody of the promises and prophecies of his Word. As described in John’s vision, the faithful overcomers of the present Gospel Age will, in the kingdom, sing another new song, “the song of Moses the servant

of God, and the song of the Lamb.” (Rev. 14:3; 15:2,3) The “song of Moses” was a victory song over evil, sung after Pharaoh and his servants were destroyed in the Red Sea. (Exod. 15:1-18) The greater song of Moses will be sung when the evil systems of the present world have been destroyed, as a result of the Time of Trouble. (Dan. 12:1) The “song of the Lamb” is the promised fulfillment of the resurrection and restoration of mankind in the kingdom on earth, because of the death of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

Those who sing the “song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb” are depicted as standing on a “sea of glass mingled with fire.” This symbolizes the position of the resurrected church in heaven who have “gotten the victory.” Even today, God’s people are learning to sing this glorious melody. In the midst of the fiery trouble with which the present age is ending, they have the vantage point given them by a knowledge of God’s plan. Their spiritual minds are able to be at peace and have a calmness, though they see around them the “sea and the waves roaring,” which so disturbs and frightens the world. They see its purpose, and that beyond the trouble will come the glorious new day of blessing for all mankind.—Luke 21:25-28; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1

“Many shall see it, and fear [reverence], and shall trust in the LORD,” continues the psalmist. (Ps. 40:3) We know that ultimately the whole world shall be filled with a knowledge of the glory of God. However, at the present time, those to whom the Lord inclines himself embrace this new song by making a full consecration and following diligently in their Master’s footsteps of sacrifice and service. (Matt.

16:24; Rom. 12:1) To thus “see” the Truth and appreciate it, our reverence for God is increased, and in that proportion, we are able to put our trust in him. What a special blessing that is in this time of distress upon the nations!—Ps. 46:1-3

The psalmist says, “Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust.” (Ps. 40:4) Today, one after another of the things in which men have put their trust are failing. Their lofty institutions are crumbling, and, symbolically speaking, they are calling for the “rocks” and the “mountains” to fall on and protect them. (Rev. 6:16) What a joy, therefore, it should be to us if in singing the new song of praise to God, others will hear and learn to put their trust in him, realizing that in the fulfillment of his promises alone will peace and joy come to the world.

HIS THOUGHTS

Indeed, many are the wonders of God, and many are his loving “thoughts toward us.” It was these thoughts that led to the provision for lifting us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of sin and death. He was thinking of us when he provided the Rock upon which our feet are now firmly established. It was his plan that made it possible for us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, with the assurance that our offering would be acceptable to him through Christ Jesus. It was God’s thoughts toward us by which he called us to be “a people for his name.”—Acts 15:14

While we were in the horrible pit we were alienated from God through sinful works. However, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (vs. 8) God’s thoughts toward us made provision for our return

to harmony and peace with him. He gave his “only begotten Son” on our behalf. (John 3:16) It is beyond our ability to fully grasp that the Heavenly Father would make provision for our being at peace with him. Yet it is so, and by this loving thought of God alone we are overwhelmed.

Paul explains that we are “justified by faith,” through Christ, and thus “we have peace with God,” and “we have access ... into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) “This grace” is that wonderful position of favor by which we can rejoice in the hope of sharing in the glories of our Heavenly Father. We cannot fully grasp this, yet it is God’s thoughts “toward us” which have made this provision. The Apostle Peter states that by the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God’s Word we will, if faithful unto death, be made “partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:4

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God has also given us his Holy Spirit, which is another evidence of his thoughts toward us. The Scriptures explain that by the Holy Spirit we are begotten to a new hope of life. Through the Holy Spirit, we are anointed as members of the body of Christ and thus authorized to be servants of God. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God, and by it we are “sealed” unto the day of our deliverance.—I Pet. 1:3; I John 2:27; Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:30

God does all these things for us, and more, through the operation of his Holy Spirit in our lives. By that Spirit we are guided in the narrow way; comforted in our sorrows; enlightened when the way seems

dark; strengthened when weary; rebuked when wayward; and warned when in danger. Truly, how wonderful is the Master's assurance that the Heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children.—Luke 11:13

GOD'S ARMOR AND FORTRESS

Even though our feet are firmly established upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, we are surrounded by enemies. Satan, as a roaring lion, is seeking to destroy us, and we must contend against the opposition of the world. There are also the foes within, that is, our own fallen flesh. (I Pet. 5:8; John 16:33; Rom. 7:18) However, we should not fear. God's thoughts toward us has provided an "armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."—II Cor. 6:7

Paul tells us that we will need to put on this "armour of God" in order to stand in the "evil day." (Eph. 6:13) If put on and properly used, this armor affords complete protection. There is the girding of our "loins ... with truth;" the "breastplate of righteousness;" for our feet the "preparation of the gospel of peace;" the "shield of faith;" the "helmet of salvation;" the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;" and the privilege of communication through prayer to our Heavenly Father. (vss. 14-18) We could never ask for armor more complete than this. With it, we are enabled to "fight the good fight of faith" and "lay hold on eternal life."—I Tim. 6:12

God has not only provided us armor, but also a "fortress." David wrote, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He

is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” (Ps. 91:1,2) Surely, we can put our trust in the Heavenly Father, for here we have another promise of his thoughts toward us, and an added indication that he has inclined toward us and heard our cry for help. He has made every provision whereby we might be victorious, and “war a good warfare” as soldiers of Jesus Christ.—I Tim. 1:18; II Tim. 2:3

THE THRONE OF GRACE

In his thoughts toward us, God knew that frequently we would need to commune with him to be reassured of his forgiveness and love, and to draw upon his grace to help in times of need. Our Heavenly Father made provision for this, arranging that although sinful and imperfect, and by nature having no claims upon his grace, we could, through Jesus’ name, come into his presence to seek forgiveness, as well as his guidance and strength in every circumstance of life.

Through his beloved Son, our Heavenly Father outlined the way we should pray, and the things for which we should ask. (Matt. 6:9-13) We can pray for the coming of his kingdom, and for our daily bread, material and spiritual. Through Christ we can ask for divine forgiveness, provided we forgive those who trespass against us. We can also claim God’s promise not to lead us into temptation, but to deliver us from evil, and the evil one, Satan.

Paul said, “my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19) For all these needs we can pray. How loving are the Heavenly Father’s thoughts toward us in making the provision *(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 31) of prayer. As New Creatures it is essential for our spiritual life. It is our line of communication whereby we keep contact with divine sources of wisdom, strength and courage to continue in the narrow way, to fight the “good fight,” and to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

Indeed, as our opening Scripture states, God’s wonders and thoughts toward us are so many and varied that “there is nothing to compare” with his provisions on our behalf, and they are “too numerous to count.” In his love he thought of all our needs from before the time he called us, even until we reach the end of the way. Beyond that, he has provided us with the hope of “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) He inclined toward us with mercy and love to forgive, guide, strengthen, protect, encourage, and inspire us with a heavenly hope. Daily, our Heavenly Father lifts his countenance upon us to give us peace and the assurance that his thoughts continue toward us. He desires that we commune with him, that we may become more intimately acquainted with him and thus rejoice the more at the blessing of being members of his family.

“LO, I COME”

Verses 7 and 8 of Psalm 40 are quoted by the Apostle Paul and applied to Jesus. (Heb. 10:7,9). They describe the Master’s spirit of consecration. “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Many of the Old Testament promises and prophecies concerning Jesus apply also to the members of his “body”—that is, they refer

to the entire Christ company. It seems reasonable that the Psalm 40 is one of these.

Because he was perfect, Jesus did not need to be lifted out of a “horrible pit” or from the “miry clay.” He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) However, those who become members of his symbolic body do need to be rescued from sin and condemnation. Through Jesus’ redemptive work on our behalf, he is represented as speaking of us as those whom “he is not ashamed to call ... brethren.”—Heb. 2:11

It was Jesus, the Head of this little company whom the Heavenly Father so specially loves, who set the example of full devotion to God, as represented by the expression, “Lo, I come ... to do thy will.” This also should be the spirit of our devotion. The loving-kindness of our God should induce us to be fully determined that, to the greatest extent of our ability, all our thoughts, words and deeds be such only as are in harmony with his will and pleasing to him.—Ps. 19:14

At times, it may be difficult for our faith to grasp the reality of the love of God, and the fullness of his thoughts toward us. In this connection, it will help if we remember that Jesus, our Head, was the first to have this love bestowed upon him, and that the Father’s love for us is because we are members of the body of Christ, all one with him. Jesus mentions this in his prayer on behalf of his body members, saying, “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26) Thus, let us not doubt that God thinks about us, loves us, and cares for us. He loved Jesus, who

was daily his delight, and Jesus prayed that this same love be manifested toward us.

GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS NOT CONCEALED

In Psalm 40:10, Jesus is prophetically represented as saying, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation." How true this was of Jesus, God's "faithful and true witness." (Rev. 3:14) It should be true of us, for Christ is our example, and we are walking in his footsteps. We cannot refrain from singing the praises of him whose thoughts toward us have filled our lives with such rich blessings, and who has taught us that he has also made provision for the ultimate blessing of all "the families of the earth."—Gen. 28:14

In the Psalm 92, we read, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." (vss. 1,2) Truly this is a "good thing" to do, and it is all we can do if we properly appreciate what the Lord has done for us. It is a joy to show forth his praises, and we can do this because he has put a "new song" in our mouths. It is the song of truth and righteousness, and the song of God's plan of salvation for both the church and the world. It is the "song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

This wonderful song is a story of divine love which, as we meditate upon it, grows more precious to us. Let us, then, not conceal this song in our hearts, but sing it aloud, letting the people near and far know how wonderful God is, and that his lovingkindness will

yet be known throughout all the earth. “All nations shall come and worship Thee, because the righteousness of all that Thou hast done has been made manifest.”—Rev. 15:4, *Weymouth New Testament* ■