

PSALM 65

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appear,

I. In the kingdom of grace (v. 1), hearing prayer (v. 2), pardoning sin (v. 3), satisfying the souls of the people (v. 4), protecting and supporting them (v. 5).

II. In the kingdom of Providence, fixing the mountains (v. 6), calming the sea (v. 7), preserving the regular succession of day and night (v. 8), and making the earth fruitful (v. 9-13). These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore we may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing it.

PSALM 65:1-5

THE PRAISES OF ZION

To the chief musician. A psalm and song of David.

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace, but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

I. How he gives glory to God, v. 1.

1. By humble thankfulness: *Praise waiteth for thee, O God! in Zion*, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach. When God is coming towards us with his favours we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. "Praise waits, with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will and dependence on thy mercy." When we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. "Praise waits thy acceptance" the *Levites* by night *stood in the house of the Lord*, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 134:1, 2), and thus their praise waited for him. *Praise is silent unto thee* (so the word is), as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent admiration at it. As there are holy *groanings which cannot be uttered*, so there are holy adorings

which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that *searches the heart and knows what is the mind of the spirit*. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to *speak forth all God's praise surely he shall be swallowed up*, ^{<187D>}Job 37:20. *Before thee praise is reputed as silence* (so the Chaldee), so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people. All his works praise him (they minister matter for praise), but only his saints bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon Mount Zion, ^{<64I>}Revelation 14:1, 3. In Zion was God's dwelling-place, ^{<37E>}Psalm 76:2. Happy are those who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him.

2. By sincere faithfulness: *Unto thee shall the vow be performed*, that is, the sacrifice shall be offered up which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay.

II. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer (v. 2): *Praise waits for thee*; and why is it so ready?

(1.) “Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. *O thou that hearest prayer!* thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think (^{<40E>}Ephesians 3:20), and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith, either in kind or kindness.” It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title.

(2.) Because, for that reason, we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits. “*Therefore*, because thou art a God hearing prayer, *unto thee shall all flesh come*; justly does every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but, when thy *house shall be called a house of prayer to all people*, then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome,”

512 Romans 10:12, 13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this *who is a God like unto him?* 3078 Micah 7:18. By this he proclaims his name (2347 Exodus 34:7), and therefore, upon this account, praise waits for him, v. 3. “Our sins reach to the heavens, *iniquities prevail against us*, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us we are full of confusion and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own, so that when we appear before God our own consciences accuse us and we have no reply to make; and yet, *as for our transgressions, thou shalt*, of thy own free mercy and for the sake of a righteousness of thy own providing, *purge them away*, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them.” Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away (v. 3) and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, v. 4. Those that come into communion with God shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed. Not only blessed is the nation (3852 Psalm 33:12), but *blessed is the man*, the particular person, how mean soever, *whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts*; he is a happy man, for he has the surest token of the divine favour and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here,

[1.] What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. *First*, It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him as one we love and value. *Secondly*, It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did, that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do to that which is the business of our dwelling-place.

[2.] How we come into communion with God, not recommended by any merit of our own, nor brought in by any management of our own, but by

God's free choice: "*Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and so distinguishest from others who are left to themselves;*" and it is by his effectual special grace pursuant to that choice; whom he chooses he causes to approach, not only invites them, but inclines and enables them, to draw nigh to him. He draws them, ~~2864~~ John 6:44.

(2.) They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changes the person, not, *He* shall be satisfied (the man whom thou choosest), but, *We* shall, which teaches us to apply the promises to ourselves and by an active faith to put our own names into them: *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* Note,

[1.] God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells, where his ordinances are administered.

[2.] God keeps a good house. There is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness, grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price.

[3.] In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied. Let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that suffices them; they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf (v. 5): *By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation!* This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither does them any wrong nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See ~~2865~~ Isaiah 45:15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made, for their sakes, among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By *wonderful* things (so some read it), things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, ~~2868~~ Isaiah 64:3. Or, "By things which strike an awe upon us thou wilt answer us." The holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness

of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is *terrible in his holy places*.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, however distressed, and whithersoever dispersed. He is *the confidence of all the ends of the earth* that is, of all the saints all the world over and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, the confidence *of those that are afar off* from his holy temple and its courts, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles, or that are in distress *upon the sea*. They trust in thee, and cry to thee, when they are at their wits' end, ^{<1977>}Psalm 107:27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but also afar off upon the sea.

^{<1916>}PSALM 65:6-13

INDICATIONS OF DIVINE POWER AND GOODNESS

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature, the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

I. He establishes the earth and it abides, ^{<1990>}Psalm 119:90. *By his own strength he setteth fast the mountains* (v. 6), did set them fast at first and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes.

— *Feriantque summos. Fulmina montes.*

The lightning blasts and loftiest hills.

Hence they are called *everlasting mountains*, ^{<1916>}Habakkuk 3:6. yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firmly than they, ^{<2540>}Isaiah 54:10.

II. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, v. 7. The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but, when God pleases, he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm quickly, ^{<1979>}Psalm 107:29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears that he whose the sea and the dry land are is girded with

power. And by this our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he *commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him*. To this instance of the quieting of the sea he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills *the tumult of the people*, the common people. Nothing is more unruly and disagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify, in secret ways, which they themselves are not aware of. Or it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, ~~(101)~~ Psalm 2:1. God has many ways to still them and will for ever silence their tumults.

III. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant, v. 8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all: *Those that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens*; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme deity, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be *set for signs*, ~~(101)~~ Genesis 1:14. Many of those that dwell in the remote and dark corners of the earth were so afraid at these tokens that they were driven to worship them (~~(101)~~ Deuteronomy 4:19), not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him.

2. As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all: *Thou makest the outgoings of the morning*, before the sun rises, *and of the evening*, before the sun sets, *to rejoice*. As it is God that scatters the light of the morning and draws the curtains of the evening, so he does both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them (~~(101)~~ Genesis 1:4), both are equally welcome to the world in their season. It is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? So does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to *sing* (so the word is); for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. We are to look

upon our daily worship, alone and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily occupations and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and, if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

IV. He waters the earth and makes it fruitful. On this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much, the psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinarily plentiful harvest or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron, which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world that every good and perfect gift is from above, *omnia desuper — all from above*; we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight, and thither must our praises return, as the first-fruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us. Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God, which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions.

(1.) God that made the earth hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, v. 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises.

(2.) God, that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness. Though the productions of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and *watered the whole face of the ground*, ^{<OR>}Genesis 2:5, 6. Our hearts are dry and barren unless God himself be as the dew to us and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water and make them to increase.

(3.) Rain is *the river of God, which is full of water*; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turns which way soever he pleases.

(4.) This river of God enriches the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth, which are produced out of its surface, are abundantly more useful and serviceable to man than those which are hidden in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit is derived from it to the earth and to man upon it.

(1.) To the earth itself. The rain in season gives it a new face; nothing is more reviving, more refreshing, than the *rain upon the new-mown grass*, ^{<2016>}Psalm 72:6. Even *the ridges* of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered *abundantly*, for they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; *the furrows* of it, which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain and made fit to receive the seed (v. 10); they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to *crown with his goodness* (v. 11), to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the comforts of it as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to *drop fatness*; for whatever fatness there is in the earth, which impregnates its productions, it comes from the out-goings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him (^{<2013>}Joel 2:13, 14) and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffusive (v. 12): *They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness*, and not merely upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts, which man takes no care of and receives no profit from, are under the care of the divine Providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God does good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty that in them the hills, *the little hills, rejoice on every side*, even the north side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as, when he

pleases, he can make them tremble (^{<B36>}Psalm 114:6), so when he pleases he can make them rejoice.

(2.) To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man, v. 9. *As for the earth, out of it comes bread* (^{<B35>}Job 28:5), for out of it comes corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it (as appears by that of our Saviour, ^{<B24>}John 12:24), and that the constant benefit we have from it is an instance of that goodness which endures for ever, we shall have reason to think that it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, v. 13. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, v. 13. So well stocked are the pastures that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them, and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The valleys are so fruitful that they seem to be *covered over with corn*, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to *shout for joy and sin*, because they are serviceable to the honour of God and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise: as there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there was none of the feasts of the Lord, among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the *feast of in-gathering at the end of the year*, ^{<B26>}Exodus 23:16. Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty, which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.