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### The Way of Salvation Under the Old Covenant as it is Revealed in the Psalter

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THE WAY OF SALVATION UNDER THE OLD COVENANT  
AS IT IS REVEALED IN  
THE PSALTER

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Old Testament Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by  
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June 1956

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## BRIEF OUTLINE

Chapter One: Introduction.

Chapter Two: The Concept of Salvation.

Thesis: To the Old Testament faithful, salvation meant a fellowship with God.

- A. The meaning of the words "To save" and "Salvation."
- B. The deeper meaning of salvation implies a fellowship with God.
- C. The loss of salvation.
- D. The hope for immortality.

Chapter Three: The Basis of Salvation: The Saving Disposition of God.

Thesis: The Old Testament faithful knew that the basis of such a fellowship was not found in themselves, but in the saving disposition of God.

- A. God loves man for His name's sake.
- B. Words used to describe the love of God.
  1. רַחֵם, God is gracious; He shows favor.
  2. רַחֵם, God is compassionate; He is soft in His love.
  3. חַסְדֵּךָ, the lovingkindness of God.
  4. אֲנִי רַחֵם, God is patient.
  5. טוֹב, God is good, pleasant, benign.



C. TIK, the truth, or reliability of God.

D. PTZ, the righteousness of God.

Chapter Four: The Salvation of God Seen in History.

Thesis: The Old Testament faithful had tangible evidence of God's saving disposition.

A. The covenant election of Israel.

B. Personal experience of God's love.

C. The Davidic throne and the promises attached to it.

D. The prophetic word concerning the advent of God to judge the earth.

Chapter Five: The Response of Man.

Thesis: Fellowship is a two-way road. God's saving disposition produces a response in man. Both are necessary for salvation.

A. The response of trust.

B. The response of love.

C. The response of obedience.

Chapter Six: Conclusion.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For a New Testament Christian the way of salvation is revealed in precise terms. God, in His love, has delivered up His only-begotten Son to the death of the cross so that those who believe in Him as the Son of God and in His sacrifice as the means whereby they receive forgiveness of sins might inherit everlasting life. For the children of God under the Old Covenant, however, His revelation was not nearly so complete. Heaven was not defined. The vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world was deeply veiled in prophecy and poetry. Their understanding of faith in the coming Son of God as the means of grasping the forgiveness of sins was, consequently, equally vague. It is not enough--if not untrue--simply to say that the faithful of the Old Testament were saved by faith in the Christ to come as we are saved by faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ who has come, without answering the problems that their incomplete revelation raises. What exactly did they mean by "salvation?" If they knew of no heaven, was their concept of salvation limited to a deliverance from the evils of life or did it go beyond? What was the answer to sin? In what manner did they, or could they receive the mercy and forgiveness of God? How did they know that God was merciful? What was the answer to



death? It is the purpose of this thesis to seek answers to these questions, and to ascertain exactly how the Old Testament faithful regarded "salvation" and how they attained or hoped to attain it.

It would be beyond the possibility for a thesis of this type to investigate every passage of the Old Testament in search of this way of salvation. This study is therefore limited to the Psalter because it is in the Psalter that the most concentrated expression of the Old Testament's faith can be found. These psalms are hymns which, for the most part, reveal the hearts of those to whom God has spoken and show us as well as, or better than, any other section of the Old Testament, how the people of God viewed salvation and how it was made their own.

In its quest, this thesis seeks to be strictly exegetical. By this is meant that it tries to set forth exhaustively the statements of the Psalter relevant to the subject. It does not seek to set forth the views of all the scholars in this field. The best and more recent commentaries are used only to help with textual difficulties and to provide background material whenever it is needed.

This thesis makes no attempt to discuss the problems regarding authorship, date of composition, unity or chronology of the various psalms. It is enough to assume that they are prayers of the elect of God in which is revealed the faith of those to whom God has spoken. To present the



material in the most acceptable way it has seemed best to use the familiar Authorized Version and its versification for the translation, with necessary corrections and advisable clarifications given in brackets with the Hebrew.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION

All religion is essentially a means whereby one can attain to a specific "salvation." The measure of a religion can always be taken by a scrutiny of its definition of "salvation" and the means it teaches to attain it. A New Testament Christian, particularly a Lutheran, has a multitude of associations with the word "salvation." In the popular mind, salvation means primarily "heaven," which is regarded as a place of some sort and somewhere to which the faithful arrive after death and/or after the last judgment. The Christian is able to reach heaven because he believes in the atoning death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. For this reason, the word "salvation" also means for the Christian the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ and grasped by faith. With these associations the word "salvation" is usually clothed whenever it is read in the Old Testament. But this is not quite accurate. The faithful of the Old Testament do not speak of heaven and knew not the Christ as we know Him. For these reasons their concept of salvation seems to be different from that of the New Testament Christian. It is the burden of this chapter to reveal from the Psalter what "salvation" meant to the Old Testament faithful and with what associations they clothed the word.



The word translated in the Psalter as "salvation" comes from the verb  $\text{שׁוּׁר}$ , to save. It is not used in the Qal, but apparently has the basic meaning of being spacious, ample. This idea of ample space is applied in Hebrew to liberty and deliverance from danger (as are the verbs  $\text{נָחַר}$  and  $\text{נָחַר}$ ) in the same way that words denoting narrowness of space are frequently used of distresses and dangers (like  $\text{צָר}$  and the noun  $\text{צָרָה}$ ). In the Hiphil, then, the verb  $\text{שׁוּׁר}$  is used to mean to set free, to deliver, to preserve (Jud. 2:16, 18; 3:31; 6:14, 15, 31, 36, etc.), and to give aid, to help (Ex. 2:17; 2 Sam. 10:19; Josh. 10:6, etc.). The derived nouns,  $\text{שׁוּׁרָה}$ ,  $\text{שׁוּׁרָה}$ ,  $\text{צָרָה}$ , mean, of course, help, deliverance, victory, or that which is delivered and safe.

In this sense of deliverance the verb is always used in the Psalter. Furthermore, it is always used of God's deliverance of man. What He delivers man from varies considerably, depending on the context. The most common is a deliverance from the enemy, be he a national enemy, a personal enemy, or an oppressor. Psalm 98:2-3 gives a good example of the word salvation used in the sense of deliverance from a national enemy:

The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen [nations:  $\text{גּוֹיִם}$ ].

He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

This passage gives the picture of a triumphant Israel, and



this triumph and glory is called the salvation of God.

Psalm 20:5 gives a similar instance:

We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

It is the deliverance, or triumph, of the king that is referred to, but it is a triumph in the name of, and under the banners of, God. This is called salvation. Examples of salvation in terms of deliverance from personal enemies are found in passages such as Psalm 7:1,

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me [my pursuers: יְרֵאָהוּ], and deliver me.

Also Psalm 35:3,

Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

Salvation is here a deliverance from the attacks of a personal foe. Psalm 57:3 makes it even clearer that the salvation of God includes a deliverance from personal enmity:

He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. [Better, ". . . save me. He reproaches him that pants after me": יְרֵאָהוּ]. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

An intense personal note is injected into Psalm 138:7 in which the psalmist speaks of salvation as a deliverance by God from a personal foe:

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me [keep me alive: יְרֵאָהוּ]: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

Passages of this sort showing that salvation is thought of



in terms of deliverance from an enemy are very frequent throughout the Psalter. These examples must suffice.

The salvation of God is also thought of in broader terms. It very frequently means a deliverance from ill fortune in general. This is shown, for example, in Psalm 34:6,

This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalm 37:39 says the same thing:

But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

Psalm 118:25 shows very clearly that salvation is thought of not only in the negative sense of deliverance from trouble, but also in the positive sense of receiving prosperity and the good things of life:

Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD  
I beseech thee, send now prosperity [or, success:  
שׁוּבָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל].

Finally, Psalm 27:1 reveals not only the wondrous trust of the psalmist but also the fact that salvation was regarded as a deliverance not only from the enemy, but from anything that would cause fear or dismay:

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

The Psalter is full of such passages showing that the idea of salvation meant deliverance from ill-fortune.

But most interesting of all are those passages that use the term salvation in the sense of deliverance from sin and



its consequence, death. Psalm 51 is the classic expression of repentance, and as such it is not surprising to find in it uses of the term salvation to mean a deliverance from sin. In the context of verse 9,

Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out  
all mine iniquities,

verse 12 reads,

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

Salvation, therefore, is deliverance from sin. Verse 14 follows,

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness [literally, from bloods:  $\text{D}^{\text{D}}\text{T}^{\text{D}}$ . This is a unique expression and has sometimes been emended to read  $\text{D}^{\text{D}}\text{T}^{\text{D}}$ , from silence, referring to the silence of Sheol, or to the silence of an ungrateful heart. It seems best to take it in its usual sense, "bloods," referring to the shedding of blood, i.e., the guilt of murder. This is a particularly good understanding if this psalm were written by David in repentance for the murder of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba], O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

God's salvation is here pleaded for the removal of guilt.

Psalm 79:9 connects salvation and the removal of sin very closely:

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the  
glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge  
away our sins, for thy name's sake.

Death is the result of sin and is the ultimate consequence of the separation from God that sin creates. Death must be regarded from this point of view if we would understand the sometimes despairing comments of the psalmists which seem so strange to a New Testament Christian. This will be



treated more fully later in this chapter, but it must be shown here that the word salvation is also used to mean deliverance from death. Psalm 68:20,

He that is our God is the God of salvation;  
and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues [escapes:  $\text{יִשְׁלַח}$ ] from death.

The God of salvation is the God that provides an escape from death. Psalm 9:13-14 has the psalmist rejoicing in God's salvation which is a deliverance not only from the enemy but also from death into which the enemy seeks to force him:

Have mercy upon me, O LORD: consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

In the context of Psalm 116:3,

The sorrows [cords:  $\text{לְבַבִּי}$ ] of death compassed me and the pains of hell Sheol got hold upon me [found me:  $\text{יָצָא}$ ],

verse 6 speaks of deliverance from death:

The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low and he helped [saved:  $\text{וַיִּשְׁלַח}$ ] me.

From these examples it is clear that the faithful of the Old Testament used the term salvation not in the sense of heaven gained, but in the sense of deliverance, whether that deliverance be from an enemy or an oppressor, from ill fortune of any kind, or from sin and its consequence, death.

If this were all that could be said concerning the Hebrew idea of salvation it would seem to indicate a very self-



centered idea of life and of God--a God who serves only as a means to obtain the good things of life. But much more can be said. It can be shown that behind every plea for deliverance and every word of thanks for deliverance lies the more profound realization that God favors them and is with them, and for this reason they are delivered. The glory of deliverance, the "joy of salvation" is, therefore, not the carnal glory of a life free from trouble and filled with good but the glory of a life that is lived in the favor and the love of God, i.e., in fellowship with Him. The oft repeated expression, "O God of my salvation" is evidence of this. Whenever this expression is used the tone is never simply a glory in the deliverance itself, but a glory in the fact that God delivers us and is therefore with us and we are His. It is on this fellowship with God that man rejoices more than in the deliverance itself which the fellowship produces.

There is abundant evidence for this in the Psalter.

For example, Psalm 56:9,

When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies  
turn back: this I know; for God is for me.

It is not so much the fact that the enemy is turned back that elates the psalmist, but the fact that God is "for me [<sup>7</sup>],"  
i.e., on my side; present with me; we are in fellowship together. Psalm 118:6-7 repeats the thought:

The LORD is on my side [i.e., for me: <sup>7</sup>];  
I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

The LORD taketh my part with them that help  
me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that  
hate me.



It is not the looking in triumph on his enemies in which the psalmist glories, but in God's fellowship. So also Psalm 41:11-12,

By this I know that thou favourest me,  
because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.  
And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine  
integrity, and settest me before thy face for  
ever.

It is not the "being upheld" that is the primary reason for the psalmist's joy, but the living "before His face" in fellowship with Him. Psalm 119:94 gives evidence of the opposite side of the coin, seeking deliverance because of the fellowship:

I am thine, save me.

Likewise Psalm 142:5-6,

I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art  
my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.  
Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:  
deliver me from my persecutors; for they are  
stronger than I.

God is his portion in life--the reason for which he lives. For the sake of the fellowship with God which this illustrates the psalmist seeks deliverance.

The Psalter also gives much evidence which shows that the Old Testament faithful regarded deliverance of any kind as the result of God's favor and their fellowship with Him. Psalm 33:18-19,

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them  
that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;  
To deliver their soul from death, and to keep  
them alive in famine.

The deliverance from death is a result of God's eye being



upon them--a result of God's favor. Psalm 41:11,

By this I know that thou favourest me,  
because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

The deliverance from the enemy shows God's delight and favor in the psalmist and His fellowship with him. Psalm 44:3,

For they got not the land in possession by  
their own sword, neither did their own arm save  
them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the  
light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a  
favour unto them [you delighted in them: רָצִיתָ בָּם].

God gave them the promised land because He favored them.

Only by this favor and fellowship does such a "deliverance" come. Again, Psalm 89:17,

For thou are the glory of their strength:  
and in thy favor [or, in thy delight: רָצִיתָ בָּנוֹן] our  
horn shall be exalted.

Exaltation or deliverance lies in the favor of God. Finally also Psalm 149:4 shows deliverance as a result of God's favor:

For the LORD taketh pleasure [or, takes delight: רָצִיתָ] in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

Since this is true, it would also follow that the Psalmists' pleading for salvation or deliverance is less a cry of the flesh for worldly good than it is a cry of the soul for fellowship with God. There is probably no better evidence for this than Psalm 22:1,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  
why art thou so far from helping me, and from  
the words of my roaring [why are the words of  
my roaring so far from my salvation: רִחַק  
לְמַעַן אֲשַׁמְרֵת דְּבַר לִי וְשִׁמְרֵתִי]

The psalmist is in distress and seeks deliverance, but most



of all he seeks a spiritual deliverance from the separation from God that has produced the physical distress. How fitting those words in the mouth of the Christ! A similar thought is expressed in Psalm 38:21-22,

Forsake me not, O LORD, O my God, be not far from me.

Make haste to help me, O LORD my salvation.

It is physical help that the psalmist seeks as the context shows, but his primary plea is for God's fellowship. Psalm 85:4 is similar:

Turn us [i.e., restore us: אלהינו], O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Psalm 17:7-8 is a poetic plea for and appreciation of the fellowship of God that is the source of deliverance:

Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

Keep me as the apple of the eye [literally, as the little man, the daughter of the eye: אפלטון], This refers to the pupil and the image that it reflects. Cf. Deut. 32:10; Prov. 7:2], hide me under the shadow of thy wings.

It is not the deliverance that is so important, but having God's face on us so intently that we are reflected in His eye. Psalm 31:19-20 speaks of deliverance in the clear spiritual tones of a fellowship with God:

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret [covert: סתר] of thy presence from the pride [snares: סכסוכים] of man; thou shalt keep them secretly [hide them: סתרם] in a pavilion from the strife



of tongues.

In this connection must be included all those passages which speak of a desire for God's face to "shine" upon them. It is obvious throughout all the Old Testament that the Hebrews pictured God's grace as the face of God turned toward them in favor. Distress meant just the opposite--God's face was turned aside from them. But this is more than just a picture, for it reveals a very profound understanding of the relationship between God and life. They knew that God's face shining upon them meant that God was with them, was "in fellowship" with them, and because of this they received all good. Good examples of this are found in Psalm 42:5,

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

and Psalm 80:3,

Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Compare also Psalm 38:14 and Psalm 4:6. In Psalm 13:1-3 the psalmist seeks deliverance from the enemy and from death, but even more he desires his fellowship with God to be restored:

How long will thou forget me, O LORD? for ever, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?  
How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?  
Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep of death.

Psalm 27:9 has the psalmist pleading for help, but it is a



plea couched in the spiritual terms of a man who knows that help comes only as a result of that fellowship with God:

Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Just as the pleas of the psalmists are not so much for the physical deliverance as they are for the spiritual fellowship that produces that deliverance, so also the Psalter gives evidence that psalmists understood that deliverance was given not in order that they might have physical pleasure but rather in order that they might walk in a fellowship with God. Psalm 11:5, 7 hints at this:

The LORD trieth the righteous.

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright [the upright shall behold his face: וְיִשְׁרָאֵל יִשְׁרָאֵל וְיִשְׁרָאֵל].

God's countenance shines on the upright and they are delivered. It is clear that God expects them to continue in that uprightness and in the righteousness that He loves. Psalm 56:13 is clearer:

For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

The psalmist does not here plead for deliverance from calamity (the falling, or stumbling, feet) in order to enjoy life, but in order to walk with God in the light of life that is His presence. Psalm 116:8-9 is parallel to this:

For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.



I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalm 130:3-4 is the most profound passage of this sort. It shows that even forgiveness is given in order that man might walk with God in His fear and not just to rid him of a guilty conscience:

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

But there is forgiveness with thee, that [with the purpose that:  $\text{לְפָנֶיךָ}$ ] thou mayest be feared.

Note here too that this passage does not speak of forgiveness so that the psalmist might receive everlasting life, but so that he might walk with God, on earth.

Several psalms express the purpose of the deliverance of God not so much in terms of an obedient walking with God as simply in terms of the joy and glory of that fellowship.

Psalm 16:1-2,

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

O my soul [not in the Hebrew. Inserted here because  $\text{נַפְשִׁי}$  is feminine], thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee [ $\text{לֹא יָשַׁע לִּי יְהוָה}$ ]. Literally, "my goodness is not upon you." It is possible to render it as "my goodness is not beyond thee" with the meaning, "I have no good besides thee"].

His highest joy is in fellowship with God; for this reason he asks for deliverance. Verses 9-11 of the same psalm expand beautifully on the same thought:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory [probably, my liver:  $\text{כִּבְדִּי}$ , i.e., my inmost being, my "spirit"] rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope [shall dwell securely:  $\text{בְּבִטְחוֹן}$ ]. Cf. Lev. 25:18-19; 26:5; Deut. 32:12;



1 Sam. 12:11, Is. 32:17].

For thou wilt not leave [abandon:  $\text{לִישׁוּבָךְ}$ ] my soul in hell [Sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One [thy godly or pious one:  $\text{קֹדֶשׁ}$ ]. Cf. Ps. 4:3; 12:1; 32:6] to see corruption [the pit:  $\text{בְּרִיחַ}$ ]. Cf. Jer. 2:6; 18:20; Prov. 22:14. It is obviously used to mean the grave here].

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

The psalmist rejoices in deliverance from death solely because of the joy that exists in the presence of God. Psalm 25:13-14 has deliverance in parallel with a beautiful expression of fellowship with God:

His soul shall dwell at ease [lodge in goodness:  $\text{לִישׁוּבָךְ}$ ] and his seed shall inherit the earth.

The secret [or counsel, hence the friendship of God:  $\text{סֵתֶר}$ ] of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

The Psalter affords a goodly number of passages which reveal that the summum bonum of the faithful is not simply a prosperous and happy life, but rather a fellowship with God. These passages show beyond dispute that the "joy of salvation" is not a carnal physical happiness, but a spiritual joy in the presence of God. Psalm 51:11-12 makes it very clear that the "joy of salvation" consists in forgiveness which will spare the psalmist the consequences of sin, namely, removal from the presence of God and the withdrawal of God's Holy Spirit:

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

The highest good is to be with God in the forgiveness of sins.



But the fact that a fellowship with God is regarded in the Psalter as the highest good in life is shown primarily by the several passages which express deep longing for this very thing. Psalm 42:1-2 is the first of these:

As the hart panteth [literally, perhaps, brayeth: אָרַץ]. Cf. Joel 1:20] after the water brooks, so panteth [as above] my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

Psalm 63:1-5 expresses the same feeling with a sincerity that touches the soul of every man of God of any age:

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty [weary: אָרַץ] land, where no water is;

To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.

Note that this psalm calls the lovingkindness of God, wherein fellowship is made available, better than life itself.

The summum bonum is not the good life, but the loving presence of God. So also Psalm 143:6,

I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.

In Psalm 84:1-2 the psalmist longs for God as he praises His temple:

How amiable [how beloved: אֲדִיבֵיךָ] are thy tabernacles [i.e., thy dwelling places: אֲדִיבֵיךָ], O LORD of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for



the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh  
crieth out for the living God.

Psalm 27:4 expresses the same longing under the same picture:

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that  
will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house  
of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold  
the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Psalm 119:20 expresses the same longing under the picture of  
God's judgments or ordinances, i.e., everything that makes  
up the true religion:

My soul breaketh for the longing that it  
hath unto thy judgments [תִּשְׁפֹּט] at all times.

Other passages reveal that fellowship with God is the high-  
est good by making that fellowship the most important thing  
in life. Though Psalm 17:14-15 is difficult to understand  
in all its parts, its whole very clearly makes the fellow-  
ship with God most important of all:

[Deliver my soul] . . . from men of the  
world, which have their portion in this life,  
and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid  
treasure [i.e., what you have stored up:  
תִּשְׂבָּעוּ בָּנִים]: they are full of children [they  
are satisfied with sons: תִּשְׂבָּעוּ בָּנִים],  
and leave the rest of their substance to their  
babes.

As for me, I will behold thy face in  
righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I  
awake, with thy likeness.

The highest good is not to be found in the world and pros-  
perity, not in a full belly nor in posterity, but in a  
fellowship with God--and a fellowship so close that the  
psalmist calls it being in His likeness. Psalm 19:10  
speaks of God's judgments, i.e., His true religion wherein  
is fellowship, as more desirable than gold and therefore more



important than anything else:

More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

In Psalm 16:5 the psalmist speaks of God as his inheritance, the reason for which he lives:

The LORD is the portion of my inheritance  
[allotment of my portion: 'P?T - 51D] and of  
my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

Psalm 119:57 says the same thing:

Thou art my portion, O LORD.

Psalm 65:4 has the psalmist content with the goodness of the temple, i.e., with the presence of God. This is the most important thing in life:

Blessed is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

The all consuming passion of this fellowship, its supreme importance in life, is shown in Psalm 69:9,

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

Salvation, then, is to be delivered from all ill-fortune, enemies, sin, and death. But salvation has a deeper meaning than simple deliverance. It means fellowship with God, in which God delivers His own, and for which His own yearn far more than for simple deliverance and prosperity. What then is the essence of the Old Testament concept of salvation? It is to live--with God. Thus Psalm 34:12, 15-16 treats life as a good and desirable thing if it is lived under the



eyes of God. Those who do not live with God are cut off:

What man is he that desireth life, and  
loveth many days, that he may see good?

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous,  
and his ears are open unto their cry.

The face of the LORD is against them that do  
evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the  
earth.

In this vein, there are many passages which reveal that the psalmists' love of life is tempered by the realization that real life--hence true salvation--is to be had only in fellowship with God. Psalm 56:13 expresses a desire to live--but to live with God:

For thou hast delivered my soul from death:  
wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that  
I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Psalm 116:8-9 is almost identical. In Psalm 27:13 the psalmist clings to life, but only because life is the external evidence of an internal fellowship with God:

I had fainted, [an addition made necessary by "unless":  $\aleph \text{ } \aleph \text{ } \aleph$ . The Masoretes indicate that they felt the word to be spurious. If omitted the passage would read, "I believe that I shall see the goodness . . ." There is no significant difference in meaning.] unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalm 16:11 equates life with the presence of God:

Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy  
presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand  
there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 36:9 is a verse of profound significance in which life and fellowship with God are brought together:

For with thee is the fountain of life: in  
thy light shall we see light.



In time of old age, when life is rapidly ebbing away, the plea for fellowship is poignant: Psalm 71:9, 18,

Cast me not off in the time of old age;  
forsake me not when my strength faileth.

Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

There are also many passages which indicate that the essence of salvation in the Old Testament is even more profound than to live with God. Salvation means to be grasped by God. In this connection come those verses which speak of God's gracious election of Israel. This grasp of God in election is salvation, deliverance, in its most profound sense. Psalm 33:12,

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD;  
and whose people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

To be chosen by God--this is fellowship and salvation.

Psalm 89:26 claims the fatherhood of God:

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,  
my God, and the rock of my salvation.

Psalm 100:3 states very emphatically that Israel belongs to God:

Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he  
that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are  
his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

This fellowship is the deeper meaning of salvation. God's election is not limited to the people of Israel as a body, but grasps also the individual. Psalm 65:4,

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and



causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell  
in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the  
goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

So also Psalm 4:3,

But know that the LORD hath set apart him  
that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear  
when I call unto him.

When God makes man His own, he is saved. Nowhere is the awe-  
someness and wonder of this grasp of God better described  
than in Psalm 139:1-12, 17-18,

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.  
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,  
thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassedst [winnowest:  $\text{אָרָב}$ , i.e.,  
"searchest out"--R.S.V.] my path and my lying down,  
and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo,  
O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid  
thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is  
high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither  
shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if  
I make my bed in hell [Sheol], behold thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell  
in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy  
right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;  
even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but  
the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the  
light are both alike to thee.

How precious [Literally, heavy, hence, perhaps,  
incomprehensible:  $\text{אֲרָבָה}$ ] also are thy thoughts  
unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they are more in number  
than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

An understanding of the concept of salvation among the Old  
Testament faithful is not complete without a clear picture



of the cause and effect of salvation's loss. Its loss is caused by sin and the result of such loss is the complete absence of fellowship with God, in death.

In the first place, sin is shown in the Psalter to be the cause of affliction and distress of every sort. Sin, therefore, is the cause for the removal of God's favor from which comes all the good things of life. No clearer statement of this can be found than that of Psalm 107:17,

Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

A more personal note is struck in Psalm 31:10,

For my life is spent [consumed:  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ ] with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity [ $\text{אֲיִשָּׁרָה}$ ]. This is preferable to the Septuagint and Syriac which has  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ , my misery, my affliction], and my bones are consumed.

The evils of life are identified with sin in Psalm 40:12,

For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me [overtaken me:  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ ], so that I am not able to look up [to see:  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ ]; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore, my heart faileth me [forsakes me:  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ ].

In Psalm 25:18 the psalmist asks for deliverance from affliction with a plea for forgiveness:

Look upon mine affliction and my pain [my weariness:  $\text{אֶחָדָה}$ ]; and forgive all my sins.

From this it is an easy step to the realization that sin is the cause of God's anger and the vanity of life. Psalm 78:59 portrays that realization on a national scale:

When God heard this [how Israel had forsaken Him and turned to idols, vv. 56-58], he was wroth,



and greatly abhorred [utterly rejected:  $\text{TND } \text{DND} \text{I}$ ]  
Israel.

Psalm 38:1-4 reveals the understanding that sin causes the wrath of God which in turn afflicts man:

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest [health:  $\text{DND}$ ] in my bones because of my sin.

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

A more mournful presentation of the fact that sin is the cause of the anger of God and the vanity of life than that of Psalm 90:7-12 is not found in Scripture:

For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told [we have consumed our years as a murmur:  $\text{DND}$   $\text{DND}$ ].

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow [yet is their pride labor and vanity:  $\text{DND}$   $\text{DND}$ ]; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Since the love and favor of God is essentially the same thing that this paper calls the fellowship with God, the opposite of love, wrath, is the same thing as the destruction of that fellowship; a separation between God and man. That the Old Testament faithful conceived of sin as an instrument of



separation from God is quite evident. The classic psalm of repentance, Psalm 51, shows that it is sin that separates from God as it cries out to God in verse 11,

Cast me not away from thy presence; and  
take not thy holy spirit from me.

Though Psalm 5 is more polemic than introspective, it still makes crystal clear that sinfulness has no part with God:

Verses 4-6, 10,

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure  
in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

The foolish [boasters: אֲשֵׁרִים] shall not  
stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of  
iniquity.

Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:  
[lies: אֲשֵׁרִים] the LORD will abhor the bloody and  
deceitful man.

Destroy thou them [charge them with guilt:  
אֲשֵׁרִים], O God; let them fall by their own  
counsels; cast them out in the multitude of  
their transgressions; for they have rebelled  
against thee.

Psalm 9:17 is equally emphatic in making sinfulness the  
cause of separation:

The wicked shall be turned into hell [Sheol],  
and all the nations that forget God.

Psalm 69:27-28, shocking though it is, makes clearer than we  
would like the fact that sin shuts man off from God:

Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let  
them not come into thy righteousness.

Let them be blotted out of the book of the  
living, and not be written with the righteous.

Further evidence that sin is an instrument of separation  
from God is shown in the fact that only through the for-  
giveness of sins is fellowship with God attained. The



blessing of God's favor is pronounced on those whose sin is forgiven in Psalm 32:1-2,

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

The "guile" mentioned is that self-deception which prohibits repentance and confession and thereby prevents the blessing of forgiveness (Cf. verse 5). The forgiveness of sins and the election to fellowship with God are already connected in Psalm 65:3-4,

Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away [cover them, *i.e.*, forgive them:  $\text{אָרְפֵּנוּ}$ ].

Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Psalm 79:8-9 pleads for deliverance from the enemy (which is the external manifestation of an internal fellowship with God) with a cry for forgiveness:

O remember not against us former iniquities [or, perhaps, iniquities of our forefathers:  $\text{אַל תִּזְכֹּר אֵלֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ}$ ]: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away [cover, forgive:  $\text{כַּפֵּר}$ ] our sins, for thy name's sake.

Psalm 103:10-13 speaks of fellowship with God in terms of a filial relationship, and bases it on the forgiveness of sins:

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so



far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Before leaving the point that sin separates from God, it is well to point out that the Psalter knows sin to be universal.

Psalm 53:2-3 is emphatic on this point:

God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.

Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Psalm 14:1-3 has the identical thought. Psalm 130:3 realizes with repentance the universality of sin:

If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who shall stand?

So also Psalm 143:2,

And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Psalm 51:5 points up the fact that sinfulness is a part of man's very nature:

Behold, I was shapen [brought forth:  
in iniquity; and in sin did my  
mother conceive me.

Sin, then, causes the loss of salvation or fellowship with God. It has been pointed out above that the essence of salvation is to have life--with God. If fellowship with God is lost, then life is lost, too. Death, then, is the ultimate conclusion of separation from God. For this reason death and Sheol, the Old Testament Hades into which all the dead must go, are consistently pictured in the Psalter as



a state of being completely forgotten and forsaken by God. Psalm 88:4-5 depicts death as being cut off from God and remembered no more:

I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.

Psalm 28:1 portrays death as a state in which God no longer speaks to them since the separation is complete:

Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

Psalm 143:7 equates the pit of the grave with God's hidden face:

Hear me speedily, O LORD, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them which go down into the pit.

In Psalm 13:1-3 the psalmist is pleading for deliverance from the enemy and, apparently, from death. But in doing so, death is portrayed as the ultimate of separation from God:

How long wilt thou forget me O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Because death is the ultimate separation from God, the Psalter frequently speaks of death in tones of despair that strike the New Testament Christian, whose ears are trained to hear in death the tones of release from woe and a birth into eternal life, rather strangely. Psalm 6:5 pleads for



deliverance from death for this reason:

For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
in the grave [Sheol] who shall give thee thanks?

Death is separation from God and the ultimate evil, not by any means a thing of joy. In Psalm 30:9 the psalmist pleads for deliverance from death on the grounds that after death and its separation from God he will be of no further use to God:

What profit is there in my blood, when I  
go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee?  
shall it declare thy truth?

Psalm 88:10-12 is similar:

Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead: shall  
the dead arise and praise thee?  
Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in  
the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?  
Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and  
thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Psalm 39:12b-13 voices profound despair in the face of death:

For I am a stranger with thee, and a so-  
journer, as all my fathers were [Cf. Lev. 25:33,  
"The land is mine, for ye are strangers and so-  
journers with me"].

O spare me [look from me:  $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרָף}$ ].  
One of the few instances which interprets the  
look of God as a thing of wrath rather than of  
favor], that I may recover strength [literally,  
brighten up:  $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרָף}$  ], before I go hence, and  
be no more.

This view of death also explains the Psalter's joy at the deliverance from death which seems rather worldly to the New Testament Christian. Psalm 16:9-11 is a classic example of the joy:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory  
[perhaps  $\text{וַיִּשְׁׁרָף}$ , my liver. Man's inmost



being is meant, what a modern would call his "spirit,") rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope [shall dwell securely:  $\pi \omega \alpha \zeta \nu \rho \psi \omega \nu$ ].

For thou wilt not leave [abandon:  $\rho \epsilon \lambda \iota \nu \epsilon$ ] my soul in hell [Sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One [Thy godly one:  $\mu \alpha \kappa \alpha \rho \iota \sigma \mu \alpha$ ] to see corruption [the pit:  $\mu \alpha \tau \alpha$ ].

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 30:3 echoes that joy:

[I will extol thee, O LORD, for] thou hast brought up my soul from the grave [Sheol]: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Psalm 86:13 praises the lovingkindness of God for deliverance from death:

For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [depths of Sheol:  $\mu \alpha \tau \alpha \tau \alpha \mu \alpha \tau \alpha \nu \tau \alpha$ ].

Psalm 118:17-18 is exultant in thanksgiving for deliverance from death:

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

From this it is clearly seen that salvation was regarded by the Old Testament faithful as life with God and that death was always regarded as evil because it was the ultimate in separation from God. Was there then no hope of immortality in their concept of salvation? Did they think that in the end every man was cursed by God and cut off from Him in death? Not at all. They knew, as every man knows, that all men die, even the righteous who are in fellowship with the eternal God. There must have existed then, this constant



tension in their mind: Death is a separation from God; the righteous live in fellowship with God--yet the righteous die. And yet, this tension never seems to create a problem. It is never discussed. Instead there are expressions such as these: Psalm 23:6,

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the  
house of the LORD for ever.

The psalmist does not write, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and then I am cast off from God and cursed." The tension is ignored and death creates no problem for him. Also Psalm 103:15-18,

As for man his days are as grass: as a flower  
of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;  
and the place thereof shall know it no more.

But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting  
to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his  
righteousness unto children's children;

To such as keep his covenant, and to those  
that remember his commandments to do them.

Here the vanity of man is lamented and the certainty of death, but the psalmist immediately speaks of the eternity of Yahweh's mercy on those who fear Him. Again, the tension is ignored, and death creates no problem. The fact that life and death are viewed in this way, and no problem is created by this tension, indicates that the psalmists had some vague hope for immortality. This hope is based on the fact that they are in fellowship with an eternal God and therefore will be as eternal as He is. They trusted that as He had been with them in the past, blessed them with



peace and prosperity, guarded and protected their lives, so He would be with them in the hour of death and bless and protect them in anything that lay beyond. What does lie beyond they do not know exactly because they had not been told, and it is to the everlasting credit of their faith and dependence on the revelation of God that they did not create an elaborate picture of heaven and hell from the speculations of their own mind. The fact that they do not speak of heaven does not mean that they had no hope for anything good after death, but means only that they had received no explicit revelation. They trusted in God that no matter what might come after death, He would be with them as He had been with them in life. W. O. E. Oesterley states it precisely,

The ideal of life held by the psalmist, that its value depends solely upon its being lived in communion with God, would not fail, sooner or later, to necessitate further thought. The sense of close union with God, which the psalmist so beautifully sets forth, with Him who is omnipotent, to whom time is nothing, leads inevitably to the question: How can such a union cease? And there we are on the very threshold of the belief in its continuance hereafter.<sup>1</sup>

There are several passages in the Psalter which reveal this fervent yet vague hope for immortality, based on the fellowship with God. Psalm 16:11, in a context of joy for deliverance from death, says:

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<sup>1</sup>W. O. E. Oesterley, The Psalms (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939), I, 89.



Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

He has been delivered from death, but he knows full well that eventually the time will come when he must die. Yet he speaks of "pleasures for evermore." Psalm 39:6-7 has the psalmist throw all his hope on God in the midst of the depressing vanity of life:

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew [in a shadow:  $\text{בְּצֵלָה}$ ]: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

Delitzsch says of this passage,

It is just this which is heroic in the Old Testament faith, that in the midst of the riddles of the present, and in the face of the future which is lost in diemal night, it casts itself unre-servedly into the arms of God.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 49:15 is a very important passage in this connection:

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave [Sheol]: for he shall receive me [take me:  $\text{לִקְחוּנִי}$ ].

The psalmist is contrasting in the psalm the fate of the wicked and the fate of the righteous. It is obvious that both must die, but only he who lives in fellowship with God has this profound hope that God shall take him and be with him through death as He has been with him through life. The psalmist is aware of a relationship to God that death cannot

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<sup>2</sup>Franz Delitzsch, The Psalms (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), II, 30.



end. Psalm 73, a psalm which speaks of envy for the lot of the wicked until their final end is considered, says in verses 23-26:

Nevertheless I am [literally, "And I am":  
 וְאֲנִי]. The contrast with the previous verse  
 makes possible the translation, "But I am,"  
 and even "Nevertheless"] continually with thee:  
 thou hast holden me by my right hand.

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and  
 afterward receive me [take me: וְיִקְבְּלֵנִי] to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is  
 none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

My flesh, and my heart faileth [is consumed,  
 finished: וְנִפְּשָׁה]; but God is the strength [rock:  
 וְצִבְיָה] of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Verse 23 speaks in contrast to the psalmist's previous near-  
 blasphemous complaints against God. In spite of these com-  
 plaints ("Nevertheless") God still holds him by the hand--  
 so great His love! But verse 24 is no longer in contrast  
 with his complaints, but in contrast with the fate of the  
 wicked. They are cast down into destruction in a moment  
 and are utterly consumed with terrors (vv. 18-19), but I,  
 I am guided by Thee, and at the end--the goal of this  
 guidance--I will be taken into the honor and glory of fel-  
 lowship with Thee. In spite of the certainty of death, he  
 hopes and trusts God. Thus the psalmist reveals a truly  
 heroic faith in God's presence with him in death and beyond  
 as He has been with him throughout life. But there is only  
 this hope of faith. It is not a hope based on a specific  
 revelation of an eternal life in heaven as in the case of  
 the New Testament church. Delitzsch writes on this passage,  
 The future is dark to him, but lifted up by the



one hope that the end of his earthly existence will be a glorious solution of the riddle. Here, as elsewhere, it is faith which breaks through not only the darkness of this present life, but also the night of Hades. At that time there was as yet no divine utterance concerning any heavenly triumph of the church, militant in the present world, but to faith the Jahwe-Name had already a transparent depth which penetrated beyond Hades into eternal life.<sup>3</sup>

From these passages it is clear that even though they had but the germ and principle of the doctrine of eternal life, they still realized that being in fellowship with the eternal God meant that they too would be eternal. They did not know how or where; they could not put this hope into specific words, but the hope and the trust was still there. It was "a postulate of faith, a splendid hope, a personal and individual conclusion."<sup>4</sup>

This then is the concept of salvation that is revealed in the Psalter. It is not merely a physical deliverance from all the evils of life, but a spiritual realization that life is lived with God. Sin destroys this fellowship and the ultimate end of that separation is death. But God in mercy forgives sin and takes man into fellowship with Him. On this fellowship is based a vague but fervent hope for immortality.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>4</sup>A. F. Kirkpatrick, editor, The Book of Psalms (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), p. xovi.



## CHAPTER III

### THE BASIS OF SALVATION: THE SAVING DISPOSITION OF GOD

The preceding chapter has shown that the man of God in the Old Testament regarded "salvation" as a fellowship with God. To be able to go through life with God, living in His love and favor, was his highest good and the basis of his hope for immortality. This chapter is concerned with showing how the people of God were able to enter into this fellowship. The previous chapter stated at several points that it is the righteous who are in communion with God (this is discussed more fully in Chapter Five). On the other hand, it was pointed out that all men are sinners and cut off from God so that only through the forgiveness of sins can man enter into a close relationship with God. Right here, then, enters the crucial question: On what basis does God forgive sins and bring man into fellowship with Him? Does He take man to Himself because man tries to be good and righteous? Or does He arbitrarily elect certain men or a certain nation to inherit His blessing? As a partial answer to these questions, this chapter seeks to show that the Old Testament faithful knew that the basis for a fellowship with God was not found in themselves but in the saving disposition of God.

The first thing to note in considering God's saving



disposition is the fact that God loves man. The word Love (אֱהָבָה) is seldom used in the Psalter to describe God's attitude toward men. When it is used, it never connotes a sentimental tolerance on His part, but always appears in a sense consistent with His holiness. For example, Psalm 11:7,

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

and Psalm 146:8,

The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind:  
the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:  
the LORD loveth the righteous.

Of far greater significance to this concept of God's love are the many passages which speak of God's saving man for the sake of His name. A name in the Old Testament is, of course, far more than a simple designation. It is the symbol or sign of the person it represents to such a degree that it is the equivalent of the person himself. Thus to be saved "for His name's sake" is equivalent to being saved by God for His own nature's sake--because He is what He is. To ask God, "Save me by thy name" is equivalent to saying, "Save me because of what you are." There are many passages which speak of God's salvation and communion taking place for His name's sake--because He is what He is. Psalm 25:11 is a good example:

For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

Likewise Psalm 54:1,

Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.



and 109:21,

But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.

Compare also Psalms 23:3; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 143:11. If God saves man, i.e., shows His love and favor to him and thereby brings him into fellowship with Him, because of what He is, then it is right to say that God wants to save man. In this sense God loves mankind. Fellowship with God is based on God's love for man, not on anything in man himself.

The saving disposition of God, which we call love, is spoken of under several different terms in the Psalter. These terms are all included in one grand word of praise in Psalm 145:8-9,

The LORD is gracious [רַחֲמִים], and full of compassion [רַחֲמִים]; slow to anger [אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם], and full of great mercy [רַחֲמִים].

The LORD is good [טוֹב] to all; and his tender mercies [compassion: רַחֲמִים] are over all his works.

This same combination of words depicting the love or saving disposition of God is found in almost exactly the same words in Psalms 51:1, 86:15; 103:8. It should be noted what each of these words reveal concerning God's saving disposition.

First of all, the Psalter says that God is gracious (רַחֲמִים). This adjective is used in the Old Testament only as an attribute of God. It comes from the verb רַחַם which means, basically, to be gracious, i.e., to show favor to someone. The Aramaic and Arabic equivalents to this verb add the overtones of yearning, longing, being inclined to, and



being compassionate. When used of the work of man it describes a) the giving of gifts (Judg. 21:22, "favor us with them"), b) a gracious dealing with the poor, the needy and the orphaned (Ps. 37:21, 26; 109:112; 112:5; Prov. 14:31; 19:17; 28:8), c) the consideration and sparing of others (Deut. 7:2; 28:50; Lam. 4:16; Job 19:21). When used of the work of God it describes God's bestowal of favors (Gen. 33:5 " . . . children which God hath graciously given thy servant;" 33:11; 43:29; Num. 6:25; 2 Sam. 12:22; Psalm 119:29, "Grant me thy law graciously"), and especially, God's bestowal of deliverance from the evils of life: enemies, ill-fortune, sin, and death. It is this use that is important at this point. Time and again the psalmist prays that God would be gracious and grant deliverance and the communion with God that it represents. He expects God to be gracious because He is gracious. A good example of this is Psalm 6:2,

Have mercy [be gracious unto me: <sup>יְיָ יְיָ</sup> ]  
upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD,  
heal me; for my bones are vexed.

In Psalm 57:1 the psalmist realized that only because God is gracious is it possible for him to take refuge in the shadow of His wings:

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful  
unto me [be gracious unto me: <sup>יְיָ יְיָ</sup> ]: for my  
soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy  
wings will I make my refuge, until these calam-  
ities be overpast.

Compare 4:1; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10, etc. God is



specifically called gracious in such passages as Psalm 111:4,

He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

Compare also Psalm 112:4; 116:5-6; 77:10. Therefore when the psalmists ask God to be gracious, or call God gracious, they show that they regard God as the giver-God. He is the God that gives the gift of deliverance. Therefore the fellowship of which deliverance is the symbol has its source in God.

The Psalter also calls God compassionate (רַחֵם). This descriptive adjective of the saving disposition of God is based on the verb רָחַם whose original meaning is dubious. The dictionaries generally assume that its basic meaning is, To be soft. The parallel words in Assyrian and Arabic mean to be inclined toward, to have compassion, to love. Further insight into the meaning of the word is provided by its derived nouns. רֶחֶם and רַחֵם mean the womb (Gen. 48:25; Prov. 30:16; Ezek. 20:26; Gen. 20:18; Job 3:11; Jer. 20:17; and also Psalms 22:10; 58:3; 110:3). In Judges 5:30 it is used to mean women. Thus the softness of femininity and maternal love is not foreign to the meaning of the word. The word רַחֵם, though generally having the more abstract meaning of compassion or "tender mercies," is also used for the bowels as the seat of the emotions (Gen. 23:30; 1 Kings 3:26; Prov. 12:10). From this it is seen that the word means compassion, i.e., the warm, emo-



tional softness of love. The psalms frequently ascribe compassion to God. For example, Psalm 111:4,

He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion [חַסְדֵיךָ יְיָ].

Compare Psalms 69:16; 112:4; 116:5-6. Of particular interest are those passages which speak of deliverance and the forgiveness of sins on the basis of God's compassion. Psalm 25:6-7 asks God to forget his many transgressions for the sake of His compassion as well as for the sake of His lovingkindness and goodness:

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies [compassion: חַסְדֵיךָ] and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Psalm 78:38 speaks of forgiveness on the basis of God's compassion alone,

But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

Psalm 79:8-9 cries for deliverance from the invader and for forgiveness of the sins that had caused God so to neglect them on the basis of His compassion and His character (His "name"):

O remember not against us former iniquities [possibly, iniquities of our forefathers: חַסְדֵיךָ יְיָ]: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge



away [forgive: רַחֵם] our sins, for thy name's sake.

The most beautiful passage of them all speaks of forgiveness because God is compassionate: Psalm 103:12-13,

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth [has compassion on: רַחֵם] his children, so the LORD pitieth [רַחֵם] them that fear him.

Even life itself, symbol and actuality of God's fellowship, is based on His compassion: Psalm 103:4,

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction [from the pit: רַחֵם]; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies [compassion: רַחֵם].

Psalm 119:77,

Let thy tender mercies [compassion: רַחֵם] come unto me, that I may live.

Clearly the psalmists knew God as a God of warmth and compassion and on this based their hope for forgiveness and life with God.

By far the most frequent word used in the Psalter to describe the saving disposition of God is the word רַחֵם, the kindness, or, more completely, the lovingkindness of God. The root רַחֵם, from which the noun is taken, is not used in the Qal. Gesenius (Thesaurus, s.v.) thinks that the primary meaning of the verb includes the idea of an eager and ardent desire, coupled with a sense of benignity. Hence the word רַחֵם indicates a kindness of God toward men that is prompted by love. "Lovingkindness" remains the best translation. The word is often used of men to describe the



kindness of men toward men (1 Sam. 20:15, "Thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever"; 2 Sam. 16:17, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?"; Ps. 141:5, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness"; Prov. 19:22; 20:6). More precise is its use when it describes the kindness of man toward the poor and the needy (1 Kings 20:31 has the servants of Benhadad saying, "We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful [kind:  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$ ]"; Job 6:14, "To him that is afflicted, pity [kindness] should be shewed from his friend"; Psalm 109:16, "[The wicked] remembered not to show mercy, [i.e., kindness], but persecuted the poor and needy man"; Prov. 11:17; 20:28). This idea of the kindness of love, or lovingkindness, is carried over to describe the attitude of God toward men. God is kind and condescends to the needs of the people. Thus God is called a kind God in passages such as Psalm 59:17,

Unto thee, my strength, will I sing: for  
God is my defence, and the God of my mercy [my  
lovingkindness, i.e., God who is kind to me:  
 $\text{רַחֲמִים}$ ].

and Psalm 62:12,

Also unto thee, O LORD, belongeth mercy  
[lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$ ]: for thou renderest to  
every man according to his work.

Compare Psalm 36:7; 144:2; Jonah 4:2, and those psalms which praise God for His kindness: 33:5; 92:1-2, 4; 100:5; 106:1; 108:4; 117:1-2; 136:1 ff., where the refrain "His mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמִים}$ ] endureth for ever" is repeated twenty-six times; 138:2.



The lovingkindness of God is recognized by the psalmists in almost every circumstance of life. He is called kind in that He delivers Israel from his enemies and from ill-fortune in general. A good example appears in Psalm 31:16,

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:  
save me for thy mercies' sake [in thy loving-  
kindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$ ].

Psalm 42:8 speaks of God's kindness as the motive for deliverance from the enemy of which the context speaks:

Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness  
[  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$  ] in the daytime, and in the night his  
song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God  
of my life.

Psalm 106:45 has God removing His punishment because of His kindness:

And he remembered for them his covenant, and  
repented [i.e., was grieved:  $\text{וַיִּתְּנֶם} \text{יְיָ}$ ] according  
to the multitude of his mercies [lovingkindnesses:  
 $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$ ].

Psalm 109:21, 26 appeals to God's kindness for deliverance:

But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy  
name's sake: because thy mercy [lovingkindness:  
 $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$ ] is good, deliver thou me.

Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according  
to thy mercy [kindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$ ].

See also Psalms 17:7-8; 44:26; 48:10; 52:1; 57:3, 10; 59:16-17; 61:6-7; 69:13, 16; 98:2-3; 115:1, and many others.

Psalm 32:10 refers to God's kindness in contrast to the sorrows of life:

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he  
that trusteth in the LORD, mercy [lovingkindness:  
 $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ} \text{יְיָ}$ ] shall compass his about.

Psalm 31:7 credits deliverance from trouble to the kindness



of God:

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy  
[lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ]: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities.

More important is the fact that God's kindness is seen as the source of forgiveness. In Psalm 25:6-7 the psalmist asks God to remember His kindness and forgive, showing that it is only in God's kindness and compassion that forgiveness is found:

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies  
[compassion:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] and thy lovingkindnesses  
[ $\text{חַסְדֶיךָ}$ ]; for they have been ever of old.  
Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy  
[lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Psalm 51:1 looks for mercy and forgiveness in God's kindness:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 103:10-11 emphasizes that forgiveness comes from God's kindness:

He hath not dealt with us after our sins;  
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.  
For as the heaven is high above the earth,  
so great is his mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ]  
toward them that fear him.

Psalm 130:7-8 states that because God is kind He will forgive:

Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ],  
and with him is plenteous redemption.  
And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Because He forgives in His kindness, He also delivers from



death in the same kindness. In a context of weakness and troubled bones, Psalm 6 prays for healing and, in verse 4, deliverance from death:

Return, O LORD, deliver my soul [i.e., my life:  $\text{שׁוּב}$ ]: oh save me for thy mercies' sake [for the sake of thy lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ].

Deliverance from Sheol is credited to God's kindness in Psalm 86:13,

For great is thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell [deepest Sheol:  $\text{אֵדְוָה}$ ].

Psalm 94:17-18 says the same thing:

Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost [shortly:  $\text{כִּי}$ ] dwelt in silence. When I said, My feet slippeth; thy mercy [thy lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ], O LORD, held me up.

Most interesting is Psalm 103:15-18 in which is contrasted the brevity of human life with the eternal kindness of God, thereby expressing the psalmist's hope for immortality:

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

But the mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Compare also Psalms 5:7; 23:6; 52:8; 103:4; 119:88, 149, 159; 138:7-8. It is clear, then, that the psalmists knew God as a kind God and looked to this kindness for all facets of "salvation."



The saving disposition of God is also spoken of under the expression, "slow to anger" (אֲרֵיבֵן אֲרֵיבֵן) in Psalms 86:15; 103:8 and 145:8. This is not a favorite expression of the Psalter and adds little to the concept of God's saving disposition, other than to picture God as very patient in dealing with the children of His love.

God is also called good (טוֹב). The basic meaning of the verb is to be pleasant or delightful. The corresponding Arabic word has the same meaning and adds that of being delicious, savory, sweet. From this basic meaning the scope of the word is enlarged to include the person who is pleased and comes to mean be well with, be good for (e.g., Psalms 119:71; 128:2). The adjective derived from this verb and ascribed to God, also has the basic meaning of pleasant, agreeable. Things are said to be "good" when they please the senses of sight, taste, and smell. Things are "good" when they please the higher nature: A pleasant person is called "good"; a word or message is called "good" when it is pleasant (Cf. Psalm 45:1), etc. The meaning of the word is also expanded to mean moral or ethical goodness. A man is called ethically good in Psalm 125:4,

Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good,  
and to them that are upright in their hearts.

God is called morally good in Psalm 119:39, 68,

Turn away my reproach which I fear: for  
thy judgments are good.

Thou art good, and doest good; teach me  
thy statutes.



and in Psalm 25:8,

Good and upright is the LORD: therefore  
will he teach sinners in the way.

Of prime importance here is the use of the word "good" in the sense of kind and benign. The pleasant kindness of men is sometimes spoken of (1 Sam. 25:15 "The men were very good unto us"; 2 Sam. 18:27), but this sense of the adjective is for the most part restricted to describing the pleasant kindness of God. Thus God is often called "good" in the same breath with which He is called lovingkind. For example, Psalm 100:5,

For the LORD is good; his mercy [lovingkindness: יִרְחֹם] is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 136:1 repeats the thought:

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:  
for his mercy [lovingkindness: יִרְחֹם] endureth  
for ever.

Compare Psalms 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29.

Because God is pleasant in His kindness, it is as pleasant to worship Him as it is to serve Him: Psalm 52:9,

I will praise thee for ever, because thou  
hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for  
it is good before thy saints.

and 54:6,

I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will  
praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good.

Compare Psalm 135:3.

In His goodness, God delivers man from all evil. In Psalm 109:21 the psalmist calls God's lovingkindness "good"



and because of this pleads for deliverance.

But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] is good, deliver thou me.

This use of the adjective makes God's mercy more available and close to the psalmist in that it says that God's lovingkindness is good to me, pleasant with regard to me. The thought is repeated almost exactly in Psalm 69:16. Psalm 73 speaks of the tragic end of the wicked and in the first verse calls God good because Israel is delivered from this calamity:

Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

In His goodness God delivers not only from ill fortune but also from its cause, the guilt of sin. Psalm 25:6-7 appeals to God's goodness as well as to His compassion and lovingkindness for forgiveness:

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies [compassion:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Psalm 86:5 has God's goodness in parallel with his readiness to forgive.

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Because God is good and pleasant in His kindness He delivers man from evil and from sin. This would mean, according to their concept of salvation discussed in the second chapter,



that God's pleasant kindness would be regarded in terms of a fellowship with God. And it is. Psalm 31:19-20 speaks of God's goodness as a covert of His presence made ready for those who trust in Him:

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret [covert: סֵתֶר] of thy presence from the pride [snares: מִכְרֹסֵי] of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Psalm 34:8 speaks of God's goodness as an incentive to enjoy his fellowship:

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

From the fact that the psalmists regard God as gracious, compassionate, kind and good, it is obvious that they based their hope for a fellowship with God not in themselves but in the saving disposition of God. Further evidence for this is found in their regard for God as a faithful God-- a God of truth--and as a righteous God who will deliver His own.

The words used to describe God as true or faithful are derived from the verb אָמַן which means, basically, to prop up, to support. From this comes the meaning, to be stayed up, firm, unshaken, such as one might safely lean on. Hence it means to be faithful. When God is called a God of אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֻנָה or a God that is אֱמֻנָה it means that God is faithful and reliable, a God who can be trusted. From the



idea of faithfulness comes that of uprightness, and from uprightness that of "truth" as opposed to falsehood. Thus the word is used in Gen. 42:16; Deut. 22:20; Prov. 22:21. Psalm 119:142 refers to God's word as being true rather than false:

Thy righteousness is an everlasting  
righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Compare Psalm 96:13; Jer. 26:15. The word is used to refer to the true religion as opposed to the false in such passages as Psalm 25:4-5,

Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy  
paths.

Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for  
thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do  
I wait all the day.

Compare Psalms 26:3; 86:11. But the primary interest here is not in this meaning of the word, but in that which shows God as reliable and trustworthy. There is a multitude of passages which, in praising the mercy of God, also praises His truth. This would indicate that God's truth is the reliability of His love. For example, Psalm 100:5,

For the LORD is good; his mercy [loving-  
kindness:  $\text{יְדוּת}$ ] is everlasting; and his  
truth [faithfulness:  $\text{יְהוָה}$ ] endureth to  
all generations.

Psalm 108:4 puts God's lovingkindness and His truth in a strict parallelism:

For thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{יְדוּת}$ ]  
is great above the heavens: and thy  
truth [faithfulness:  $\text{יְהוָה}$ ] reacheth unto  
clouds.

See also Psalms 36:5-6; 91:4; 92:1-2; 98:2-3; 115:1; 117:1-2; 138:2. Psalm 119:71, 75 is interesting in that it reveals



a trust in the reliability of God's love even in adversity:

It is good for me that I have been afflicted;  
that I might learn thy statutes.

I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right,  
and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Several passages appeal to the reliability of God's love for deliverance. Psalm 61:7 is a good example:

He [the king] shall abide [sit enthroned:  
לֹא יִשָּׁחַט ] before God for ever: O prepare mercy  
[lovingkindness: רַחֲמִים ] and truth [faithful-  
ness: אֱמוּנָה ], which may preserve him.

Psalm 69:13 appeals to God's reliability as well as His lovingkindness:

But as for me, my prayer is unto thee,  
O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the  
multitude of thy mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמִים ]  
hear me, in the truth [faithfulness: אֱמוּנָה ]  
of thy salvation.

Psalm 54:5 calls for destruction of the enemy because of God's faithfulness to His own:

He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:  
cut them off in thy truth [faithfulness: אֱמוּנָה ].

Psalm 31:5 expresses profound trust based on God's truth:

Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou  
hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth [faithful  
God: אֱמוּנָה ].

Compare Psalms 94:14 and 138:8 which express the same idea without using the word "truth."

From these passages, it is clear that the psalmists knew God as entirely trustworthy in His love for them. To this faithfulness they looked for deliverance and for the fellowship behind it, not to anything in themselves.



The righteousness of God as a part of His saving disposition is very similar to the idea of His faithfulness. The idea of righteousness is derived from the verb  $\text{P} \bar{\text{T}} \text{Y}$  which means to be right, to be straight. In the Old Testament the word has lost almost entirely its physical sense of straightness and is used only in the abstract sense of being just and fair. The moral righteousness of God is shown in such passages as Psalm 50:6,

And the heavens shall declare his  
righteousness: for God is judge himself.

Psalm 96:13 speaks of God's moral righteousness in judging the world:

For he cometh, for he cometh to judge  
the earth: he shall judge the world with  
righteousness, and the people with his truth.

The moral righteousness of God expressed in judgment is vividly described in Psalm 7:11-13,

God judgeth the righteous [God is a righteous judge:  $\text{P} \bar{\text{T}} \text{Y}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$ ], and God is angry with the wicked ["with the wicked" is not in the Hebrew text] every day.

If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors [He makes His arrows into fiery shafts:  $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$   $\text{S} \bar{\text{O}} \text{D}$ ].

From the idea of God's moral righteousness comes that of a righteous way of life corresponding somewhat to the righteousness of God. Psalm 5:8 is an example:

Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.



A similar thought, using the term "upright" rather than "righteous," is expressed in Psalm 25:8 where God in His uprightness also teaches sinners "the way," presumably the way of His righteousness:

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore  
will he teach sinners in the way.

The idea of moral righteousness does not, however, exhaust the meaning of God's righteousness. There are many passages in which His righteousness is spoken of in connection with His mercy and love, indicating a thought vastly different from that of God judging and condemning. Psalm 33:5, for example, has God's lovingkindness and righteousness in parallel:

He loveth righteousness and judgment: the  
earth is full of the goodness [lovingkindness:  
טוֹב] of the LORD.

Psalm 112:4 speaks of God's righteousness in the same breath with His grace and compassion:

Unto the upright there ariseth light in  
the darkness: he is gracious, and full of com-  
passion and righteous.

In Psalm 116:5-6 righteousness keeps the same company and delivers rather than condemns:

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea,  
our God is merciful [compassionate: חַסְדִּים].  
The LORD preserveth the simple: I was  
brought low, and he helped [saved: יִשְׁעַנִּי] me.

In a context of providence and answered prayer, Psalm 145:17 connects God's righteousness and His lovingkindness:

The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and  
holy [lovingkind: טוֹב] in all his works.



From these passages it seems that the righteousness of God is that which is fair and just to those whom He has chosen and this fairness delivers them. Thus the righteousness of God is not only that which judges and condemns but also that which delivers. In this sense God's righteousness is often spoken of in the Psalter. A good example is Psalm 36:5-6 which connects God's mercy with His righteousness and both with deliverance:

Thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$  ], O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains [er, as the mountains of God:  $\text{כְּהַרְרֵי אֱלֹהִים}$  ]; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest [savest:  $\text{שָׁמַרְתָּ}$  ] man and beast.

In Psalm 98:2-3 the righteousness of God is equated with salvation, or deliverance:

The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen [nations:  $\text{בְּעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם}$  ].

He hath remembered his mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$  ] and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

The same thought is expressed in Psalm 22:3-5 which uses the word "holy" rather than "righteous:"

But thou art holy [ $\text{קָדוֹשׁ}$  ], O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

Psalm 48:10, in a context of praise to God for victory, speaks of God's righteousness in the sense of deliverance:

According to thy name, O God, so is thy



praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Compare Is. 42:6; 45:8; 46:13; 51:6, 8; etc. A personal note is struck in Psalm 31:1,

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Psalm 36:10,

O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart,

is followed by praise for deliverance from the enemy, indicating that the righteousness of God delivers. Psalm 71:2, 15, 24 repeats this thought:

Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.

My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

Without using the word righteousness, the idea of God's righteousness as a sense of fairness in which God delivers His own in time of need is clearly seen in Psalm 35:10,

All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

and 76:9,

God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.

Psalm 51:14 speaks of God's righteousness in connection



with what appears to be forgiveness of sin:

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness [literally, from bloods: ד'ִּוְדָב. The meaning seems to be the shedding of blood and the consequent guilt], O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

God's righteousness is also appealed to for deliverance from death in Psalm 143:11,

Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

Most profound of all, Psalm 89:15-16 speaks of God's righteousness in connection with walking in the light of God's countenance, i.e., in fellowship with Him:

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

From these passages it is clear that God's righteousness is not only His moral holiness in which He judges and condemns, but also His fairness which will not let Him forsake these who are the recipients of His love. In this fairness He delivers from all evil including sin and death and brings man into fellowship with Him.

On the basis of the Psalter's understanding of God's saving disposition, His graciousness, compassion, loving-kindness, goodness, faithfulness and righteousness, it can be said without fear of contradiction that the Old Testament faithful saw clearly that the basis for the fellowship with God, which is their "salvation," was to be found not



in themselves, i.e., their own piety and moral effort, but in God's love and mercy alone.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SALVATION OF GOD SEEN IN HISTORY

The men of God under the Old Covenant looked for their salvation to the saving disposition of the eternal God. Without any hesitancy or doubt they appealed to God's love and mercy for fellowship with Him. How did they know with such certainty that God loved them and wanted them to be with Him? It is the burden of this chapter to show that the Old Testament faithful had tangible evidence of God's saving disposition in His covenant election of Israel, in their own personal experience of His love, in the Davidic throne and the promises connected with it, and in the prophetic word that God Himself would come to judge the earth.

The most potent evidence that Israel had of God's abiding love and mercy was the evidence provided by God's choice and election of Israel to be His own in a covenant relationship. The realization of this election by God was a constant source of comfort to the Old Testament people of God. Psalm 147:19-20 exults in Israel's election:

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes  
and his judgments unto Israel.

He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as  
for his judgments, they have not known them.  
Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 135:4 is very similar:

For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto him-  
self, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.



The whole of Psalm 105 reveals a knowledge of God's fellowship based on the deeds of God to His covenant people.

Verses 7-8 sum it up:

He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.

He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

Compare Psalms 78, 106, 136.

More explicit reference is made in other psalms to the specific covenant deed of God performed at the time of the exodus from Egypt. This was for them the climactic deed of God's love. Psalm 66:5-6 refers to it:

Come and see the works of God; he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.

He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood [river:  $\text{רַבְרַב} \text{ } \overline{\text{ע}} \text{ } \overline{\text{צ}}$ ] on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

In the same way Psalm 68 meditates on the exodus as evidence of God's love: Verses 7-9,

O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness;

The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

Most interesting is Psalm 103:7-8 which specifically connects the exodus under Moses with God's love and mercy:

He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

The LORD is merciful [compassionate:  $\text{רַחֻם}$ ] and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֻם}$ ].



Psalm 44:1-3 speaks of the possession of the promised land as evidence of God's favor or delight:

We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people and cast them out.

For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

So also Psalm 136 recites the whole exodus history with the repeated refrain, "O give thanks unto the LORD . . . for his mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{יְרַחֵם} \text{ ] endureth for ever." God's remembrance of the covenant is connected with the loving-kindness of God in Psalm 106:45-46,$

And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented [i.e., was grieved, pitied:  $\text{נִחַם} \text{ ] according to the multitude of his mercies [loving-kindness: } \text{יְרַחֵם} \text{ ]}.$

He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.

These passages all indicate that the people knew God's love for them through the evidence provided by His covenant deeds. Further evidence for this is found in the fact that they appealed to the covenant relationship as a reason for which God should deliver them, as in Psalm 74:2, 20,

Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old: the rod [better, tribe:  $\text{שֵׁבֶט} \text{ ] of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.$

Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.



Compare Psalm 44:17. Finally, their meditation on God's covenant works of love as a means for comfort and obedience marks these works as evidence of God's favor. In Psalm 77 the psalmist, in a context of abject grief because of his apparent abandonment by God, looks to God's works for assurance and comfort: Verses 11-15:

I will remember the works of the LORD:  
surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

I will meditate also of all thy work, and  
talk of thy doings.

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who  
is so great a God as our God?

Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou  
hast declared thy strength among the people.

Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people,  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

Psalm 78:7 calls for a meditation on Israel's history as a source of hope in God and of obedience:

[Give ear to a rehearsal of Israel's history]  
that they might set their hope in God, and not  
forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

But the evidence for God's love and favor was not by any means restricted to God's deeds to the nation at large. There is also much evidence in the Psalter that the faithful knew of God's love and favor on the basis of God's acts done to or for them as individuals. In other words, personal experience assured them of God's favor. Their escapes from all the ill fortunes of later life were credited by the psalmists to God and were regarded as evidence of His love. Psalm 18:16-19 rehearses the psalmist's personal deliverance and ends with the realization that deliverance came because of God's favor:



He sent from above, he took, he drew me out of many waters.

He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

They prevented me [confronted me: "חִבְּרִי?"] in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The same thought is repeated in Psalm 41:11 where deliverance from the enemy is regarded as evidence of God's favor:

By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

Compare Psalm 30:1-3; 31:22; 34:4, 6.

Not only the negative deliverance from evil is regarded as evidence of God's favor, but also the positive idea of God as the source of all goodness in life. The whole of Psalm 23 immediately comes to mind as the perfect example of God's providential care providing evidence of His love:

"The LORD is my shepherd!" This is known because "goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Psalm 40:5 extols God's gracious activity to His own:

Many, O LORD, my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

From these acts the psalmist knew of God's love. Psalm 107 calls on the individual to regard God's goodness and wonderful works in nature, history, and personal experience, and concludes by saying these things give evidence of God's lovingkindness: Verse 43,



Whoso is wise, and will observe these things,  
even they shall understand the lovingkindness of  
the LORD.

Psalm 103:1-5 sums up all of life, including forgiveness,  
health, deliverance from death, and all good things, in a  
sweeping word of praise for all these proofs of God's love  
and favor:

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that  
is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not  
all his benefits:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who  
healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction  
[from the pit: אֲבִוֹן]; who crowneth thee with  
lovingkindness and tender mercies [compassion:  
רַחֲמִים];

Who satisfieth thy mouth [אֲרַבֵּךְ]. The con-  
text seems to require such a translation, although  
the usual meaning of the word is an ornament: Ex.  
33:4, 6; Jer. 4:30; Ezek. 16:7. It is possible  
that the word is used to denote the soul, as "my  
glory" and "my darling" are elsewhere. The fact  
that the soul is addressed makes this use unlikely  
but not impossible. The Targum translates it as  
old age, the Septuagint has ἐπιθυμία, desire. No  
final answer can be given.] with good things so  
that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Compare Psalms 16:6-7; 21:1-6.

Finally, evidence of God's love is also gained by the  
psalmists from nature itself. In Psalm 75:1 the psalmist  
regards all the wondrous works of God and sees in them  
evidence of the nearness of God:

Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto  
thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is  
near thy wondrous works declare.

The great liturgical Psalm 136 includes the glories of the  
universe as evidence of God's lovingkindness: Verses 5-9,



To him that by wisdom made the heavens:  
for his mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{יְרֻחֵם}$ ] endureth  
for ever.

To him that stretched out the earth above  
the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.

To him that made great lights: for his  
mercy endureth for ever:

The sun to rule by day: for his mercy en-  
dureth for ever:

The moon and stars to rule by night: for  
his mercy endureth for ever.

From these passages it is clear that the Old Testament people of God had tangible evidence of God's love in His covenant relationship with the nation, His dealing with the individual, and the works of His creation. They had another kind of evidence of God's fellowship. This evidence, based on God's promise to David through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 7:12-16) was their hope for a king that would bring to perfection that relationship to God which the throne symbolized and even offered in part.

The so-called Royal Psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132) consistently describe the king in extremely lofty terms. But this is not done in the fawning manner of a servile poet seeking favor in the court, but in a manner that can only be described as religious and even prophetic. Their view of the office of the king was religious and prophetic because they knew that the king ruled a people that God had chosen to be His own in a peculiar sense. Through many years of their national existence God Himself ruled the people directly through Moses, Joshua, and the Judges. Now a king ruled in Jerusalem, but Israel still



belonged to God--not to any human king! In other words, the king was not an absolute monarch, but reigned under God, even, in a sense, for God. Therefore the king on the throne in Jerusalem was regarded in the religious sense of God's representative to the people of Israel and to the nations of the world, and as a representative of the people to God. Kirkpatrick gives an excellent summary of this:<sup>1</sup> To show that the king was regarded as a representative of the people, he points to the fact that as the people were called God's son and firstborn (Ex. 4:22-23; Deut. 32:6; Hosea 11:1), and His servant (Is. 41:8, "Thou, Israel, art my servant"), so the Davidic king is called God's son and firstborn (2 Sam. 7:14, "I will be his father and he shall be my son"; Psalm 89:26-27, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father . . . Also I will make him my firstborn") and His servant (2 Sam. 7:5 ff., "my servant David"). To show that the king was regarded as a representative of God to the people he points to the frequent reference to the king as the anointed of Yahweh", i.e., appointed by God as king of His people, and hence as His viceroy and representative. Along this line of reasoning, God calls the king, "my king," in Psalm 2:6,

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill  
of Zion.

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<sup>1</sup>A. F. Kirkpatrick, editor, The Book of Psalms (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), pp. lxxvi-lxxvii.



2 Chron. 28:5 says of the king that He "sits upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel," and 1 Chron. 29:23; 2 Chron. 9:8 refer to the king as sitting "on the throne of the LORD." As God's viceroy, the king was promised sovereignty over all the nations and a permanent dynasty (2 Sam. 7), and an "everlasting covenant" was made with the house of David (2 Sam. 23:5). With this religious understanding of the throne the Royal Psalms were written with prophetic force. They were prophetic because they directed the hope of the people forward to a time when a king should come who would fulfill to the utmost the promises that had been given to the king and to Israel. Successive kings inhabiting the throne of David failed to fulfill the promises given to David. But though they failed, the promise remained unrevoked, "waiting for one who could claim its fulfillment in all its grandeur."<sup>2</sup> The "Son of David" would come who would fulfill what the throne of David symbolized; who would be the Son of God in fact and not in figure; who would rule the people as God and represent the people to God as a man; who would act as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, bringing God and man together in a perfection of that relationship which the throne of David symbolized and offered in part. It was "through the institution of the kingdom that men were taught to look for Him," and the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. lxxvii.



fulfillment of these psalms in Him, "presumes rather than excludes the view that they had a true, if partial, meaning for the time at which they were written."<sup>3</sup>

Psalm 2 has the historical setting of nations mustering their forces against a newly enthroned king of Israel. This is futile because the king of Israel is the son of God (2:7, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee") and their fight is ultimately against the invincible God. But beyond this historical setting is seen the prophecy that the time would come in which the very Son of God would sit upon the throne of David and rule the peoples of the earth.

Psalm 18 pours out the king's thanksgiving to God for victory and deliverance. In verse 43 the king is given a position as head of the nations and in verse 49 the reason for this is given:

Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen [nations: אֲרָצוֹת]: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen [among the nations: אֲרָצוֹת], and sing praises unto thy name.

This grandeur was never achieved by any king of Israel. Thus these verses, too, bear within themselves a prophecy that the Perfect King would rule all nations. In verse 50, the king is again called God's and His anointed, pointing forward to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. lxxxii.



the King who would actualize this relationship to God which the present king could only represent:

Great deliverance [גְּדוּלָתוֹ] giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy [רַחֲמָיו] to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

Again in Psalm 20 the king is related prophetically to God as His anointed representative, and this is made the basis of intercession and confidence: Verses 6-7,

Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.  
Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:  
but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Psalm 21:5-7 has the same thought.

Psalm 45 claims for the Davidic king the fullness of the promise of an eternal dominion: Verse 6,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre  
[a sceptre of uprightness: יֵשׁוּבִיט כִּי־שֵׁטֶר].

The abrupt address to God in this verse (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עֹלָם) has caused no end of difficulty. Some have suggested "thy throne is divine" or "thy throne (is the throne of) God," but neither of these do justice to the Hebrew. It is best to regard it as an address to the king, who as the representative of God sits on the throne of God. But it means more than this, especially when it is compared with Psalm 2:7. Not only is the king the representative of God, but the time will come in which that king will be God and His throne will be eternal.

Psalm 61 speaks of the eternity of the king, which re-



fers partly to a long life, partly to an enduring dynasty but which also embodies a prophecy that could be fulfilled only by the One Who is greater than David: Verses 6-7,

Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations.

He shall abide [perhaps, sit enthroned: 24?] before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.

Psalm 72 speaks of the universal dominion and eternal character of the throne and of Him who would be occupying it to fulfill its meaning: Verses 8, 11, 17,

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Compare Psalm 2:8.

Psalm 89 pleads for the renewal of divine favor in a time of national crisis when the present distress is in great contrast with the promise to David. This psalm prophetically describes the close relationship between king and God which would be perfected by Him who would be both God and man: Verse 18,

For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy one of Israel is our king.

In verses 26-27 the king calls God his Father and God calls the king His first-born:

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,



my God, and the rock of my salvation.

Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Psalm 110 is a solemn oracle that emphasizes the divine nature of the throne through which God acts: Verse 1,

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Some give to this verse a historical background and assume that the psalmist is addressing the king as God's representative. But even this assumption would not deny a prophetic meaning in the passage which points forward to the Perfect King who would indeed sit at the right hand of God. Furthermore, if the superscription  $\text{?} \text{!} \text{?}$  is regarded as genuine as the New Testament does (Matthew 22:41-45), David here speaks of "my Lord," indicating that he speaks with prophetic power of the Perfect King to come. The psalm also emphasizes the priesthood of this king, acting as a representative both of God and of the people, and thereby prophetically indicates that the Perfect King would bring God and man together as the one Mediator between God and man: Verse 4,

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Psalm 132 refers to the promise of an eternal dynasty in verses 11-12,

The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.  
If thy children will keep my covenant and



my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

But in verse 17, the psalm speaks also, it seems, of the one perfect Son of David that should come:

There will I make the horn of David to bud.

Compare Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12, where the derived noun of the verb  $\pi\omicron\gamma$ , to bud, or sprout, is used as a title of the Messianic king.

These psalms, making the king the representative of God to the people and of the people to God, and pointing forward to the King who would perfect in Himself that relationship between God and His people, reveal that the throne of David provided the faithful of God with tangible evidence of God's love for them and His fellowship with them.

A final evidence of God's love and favor was found by Israel in the word of God spoken by the prophets. This was the promise embodied in the prophetic "Day of Yahweh," the day in which God would come and intervene in the affairs of the world. It was a day of terror insofar as it brought the judgment of God, but it was also evidence of God's love insofar as it brought the rule of God and fellowship with God to perfection. This promise is only faintly echoed in the Psalter, but it is included here to show that the coming of God was regarded as evidence of His love and to show that the incarnation was not without its expectation. Psalm 18 graphically pictures the coming of God in response to prayer and for deliverance from the enemy: Verses 6-9,



In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

Then went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.

Psalm 50 glorifies the majesty of God and then says in verses 3-4:

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

Psalm 96 refers to God's coming to judge the world and calls upon all creation to "sing a new song" because of it. His coming to judge is, then, a thing of deliverance and not only of condemnation: Verses 12-13,

Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Psalm 98 has the same joyful response to the coming of God to judge the earth: Verses 8-9,

Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Israel, then, had tangible evidence in history that God loved them and had a saving disposition toward them. This



evidence was found in the deeds of love that God performed in behalf of His covenant people, in their own experience of His love in nature and in their personal lives, in the promise of perfect fellowship inherent in the Davidic throne, and in the promises of His coming to judge the earth.



## CHAPTER V

### THE RESPONSE OF MAN

The Old Testament faithful looked to God and saw in Him a loving God, full of compassion and grace and loving-kindness. They looked to their history, national and personal; they looked also to the promises of God, and knew from what they saw that He was a loving, kind and gracious God. Because He was a God of love and mercy, they looked to Him for deliverance from all ill and for the accomplishment of that fellowship with God which they knew to be their highest good. God was to them the source of all good, the source of salvation, the source of forgiveness, the source of fellowship. But fellowship must always be a two-way road. All God's compassion and love will avail nothing for the man who obstinately rejects that love. God's saving disposition must produce a response in man. Without that response there can be no fellowship. This is not to say that the Old Testament faithful regarded a response as a means of earning the right of fellowship with God, for fellowship was found only in God's gracious disposition, not in man. Nor is this to say that the response of man was something that originated in himself and which he contributes as his part in obtaining salvation or fellowship with God, for a response does not create itself but is created by another. The response of man is always created



in him by the saving disposition of God. It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss this response of man in three parts: the response of trust, of love, and of obedience, showing both their character as response and their necessity for a complete fellowship with God.

The response of trust is the most profound and important response that the love of God produces in man. Whether the word used to designate this trust in God be the word trust itself ( $\pi\omega\tau$ ) or the word that means to flee for refuge ( $\alpha\tau\tau\alpha$ ) or "hope" ( $\lambda\pi\tau$ ) or the idea of "waiting for" ( $\sigma\tau\epsilon\tau$ ), or the Hiphil of  $\tau\omega\tau$  "trust in, believe in" ( $\tau\omega\tau$ ), God loves me, I will depend on Him. This trust is always based on the saving disposition of God, that is, on the knowledge that God loves them. There are, for example, many passages which trustingly appeal to the love of God: Psalm 6:4,

Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake [for the sake of thy lovingkindness:  $\alpha\tau\tau\alpha$   $\tau\omega\tau$ ].

Compare Psalms 40:11; 44:26; 69:16. More important are those passages which state clearly that it is in the mercy and love of God that the psalmists trust: Psalm 13:5,

But I have trusted in thy mercy [loving-kindness:  $\alpha\tau\tau\alpha$ ]; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

Psalm 36:7 praises the lovingkindness of God as the reason for which man can trust God:

How excellent [or, how precious:  $\alpha\tau\tau\alpha$  -  $\tau\omega\tau$ ]



is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Compare Psalm 31:5. Under the picture of the temple as the place where man draws near to God, the psalmist trusts in God's love for fellowship with Him: Psalm 52:8,

But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ] of God for ever and ever.

Psalm 5:7 is very similar:

But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֶיךָ}$ ]: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Knowing that God loves them, and basing their trust in this love, the psalmists look to God for deliverance from all ill fortune, sin, and death. The Psalter is full of expressions of trust in God for deliverance from the enemy, whether that enemy be personal, national, or figurative. Psalm 31:14-15 provides a good example of this trust for deliverance from the enemy:

But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said,  
Thou art my God.  
My times are in thy hand: deliver me from  
the hand of mine enemies, and from them that  
persecute me.

Psalm 123:2, in a context of appeal for deliverance from the enemy, uses the example of a slave's dependence on his master to show man's dependence on God for deliverance:

Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us [be gracious to us:  $\text{רַחֲמֵנוּ}$ ].



Psalm 91:2 expresses the psalmist's trust in God for defense in the same way that the godless would trust in a man-built fortress:

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Psalm 118:8-9 follows this up by urging a trust in God rather than human alliances:

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

Psalm 56:3-4, 10-11 expresses a trust in God that conquers all fear:

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.

In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

For further passages expressing this trust for deliverance from the enemy see Psalms 3:3-4, 6; 5:11; 7:10; 11:1; 18:2; 20:7; 25:15; 27:1-3; 28:7; 33:20; 42:5, 11; 43:5; 62:1; 124:8.

That the psalmists trusted in God for deliverance from ill fortune in general is shown by a passage such as Psalm 21:7 which has the king trusting in the love of God that he be not moved, i.e., that he stand firm and erect, free from all adversity:

For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֵי] of the most High he shall not be moved.



Psalm 121:1-3 echoes this thought:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills  
[i.e., to Zion and to God whose temple is there.  
Cf. Psalms 87:1; 125:1-2; 133:3], from whence  
cometh my help [probably  $\text{מֵאַיִן}$  should be taken  
as an interrogative adverb: "Where does my help  
come from?" This is not a question of doubt or  
despondency, but is asked to introduce the  
answer which follows].

My help cometh from the LORD, which made  
heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he  
that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Compare Psalms 16:8; 55:22. Psalm 112:7 shows that no evil  
can cause fear or dismay to the man that trusts in God:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his  
heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

The perfect summary of this lies in the sweeping assertion  
of Psalm 23:1,

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The psalmists also express trust in God for deliverance from  
death in such passages as Psalm 23:4,

Yea, though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death [ $\text{בְּצֵלַת מוֹת}$ . More likely  
 $\text{בְּצֵלַת מוֹת}$ , meaning a deep gloom since a com-  
pound like  $\text{בְּצֵלַת מוֹת}$  is very rare in Hebrew.<sup>1</sup>  
The meaning remains the same.], I will fear no  
evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy  
staff they comfort me.

In Psalm 55:23 the psalmist looks at the early punitive  
death of the wicked and turns to God trusting for deliver-  
ance from a like fate:

But thou, O God, shalt bring them down

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<sup>1</sup>A. F. Kirkpatrick, editor, The Book of Psalms (Cam-  
bridge: University Press, 1951), p. 126.



into the pit of destruction [or, pit of the grave: אַיִן וְיָמָיו כַּסֵּף]: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days: but I will trust in thee.

And, finally, the psalmists also express a trust in God for the forgiveness of sins. In Psalm 38, speaking of sin as the cause of God's wrath, the psalmist expresses a trust that God will hear his prayer and forgive his sins: verse 15,

For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

Psalm 39:7-8 hopes in God for forgiveness:

And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

Deliver me from all transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

Psalm 130:7-8 echoes that hope:

Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֵיךָ יְיָ], and with him is plenteous redemption.

And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

But the most important element to be seen in this response of trust is the fact that it is because of man's trust that God is moved to grant deliverance and to take men into fellowship with Him. This is seen in the fact that the psalmists frequently appeal to their trust in God as a reason for which God should deliver them. In Psalm 25:1-2 the psalmist appeals to God not to disappoint his trust in Him, but to deliver:

Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

This appeal is repeated in verse 20,



O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

Psalm 71:1-2 makes the same claim for deliverance:

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion [or, be ashamed, disappointed: אֲשִׁיבוּנִי].

Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

Compare Psalm 31:1. Psalm 7:1 is a prayer for deliverance on the basis of the psalmist's trust:

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

Psalm 33:22 asks for a demonstration of God's love and mercy because of the psalmist's hope in Him:

Let thy mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֶיךָ], O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalm 143:8 is similar:

Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Compare Psalms 16:1-2; 57:1; 86:2-3.

Not only do the psalmists appeal to their trust in God as a reason for which God should deliver them, but they also make frequent assertions that God's love is given to those that trust in Him. The blessing of God in general is given to those that trust in Him, according to Psalm 34:8,

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psalm 40:4 says the same thing:

Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD



his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies or to idols: Cf. Amos 2:4; Ezek. 13:6 where the word is used for a false oracle .

Psalm 78:21-22 gives the converse: Israel is punished because they did not trust in God,

Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger also came up against Israel;

Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.

Deliverance from death and famine is given to those who hope in God's love, according to Psalm 33:18-19:

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy [lovingkindness: יְהוָה רַחֵם];

To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Psalm 34:22 asserts that God delivers those that trust in Him from condemnation:

The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate [i.e., held guilty, condemned: יִצְוֶה אֱלֹהִים].

Psalm 37:5 exhorts to trust in God, and in verse 40 asserts that God helps, delivers, and saves man because he trusts in God:

Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Finally, there are passages also that indicate that not only the symptoms of fellowship (deliverance, good fortune, etc.) are given to those that trust, but also the fellowship it-



self. Psalm 31:19-20 speaks of this:

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret [covert: סֵתֶר] of thy presence from the pride [snares: סִנְאוֹת] of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Also Psalm 147:11 indicates that the pleasure, or fellowship with God is given to those that trust:

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֵי].

For other passages treating the love of God that is given to trust, see Psalms 9:10; 17:7; 32:10; 33:21; 37:9, 34; 125:1-2.

Trust in God, then is the first of the three major responses that the love of God works in man. To this trust, and only to this trust, does God give His love and the benefit of fellowship. Without that love and fellowship in God there could be no trust in God, for it is this love that produces it. Likewise, without trust in God there could be no fellowship with God, for it is to trust that God gives Himself.

The second major response is that of love toward God. Love is a natural and expected response manifested in joy and thankfulness to God for His deliverance and favor. Psalm 18:1-2 reveals the soft love with which the psalmists responded to the fellowship with God and its deliverance:

I will love thee [אֶהֱבֶךָ], O LORD,



my strength.

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

In Psalm 116:1 the psalmist responds with love to the fellowship with God and its answered prayer:

I love [יְהוָה] the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

More frequently, this response of love for God is expressed in terms of an inner exuberant joy and happiness in His favor. Psalm 31:7 speaks of this joy in response to God's love:

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֶיךָ]: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities.

In Psalm 68:3 the faithful are filled with exultant joy because they live--with God--while the wicked perish:

The wicked perish but let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

Psalm 90:14 shows that the joy and gladness of the psalmists' love is in response to God's love:

O satisfy us early with thy mercy [lovingkindness: רַחֲמֶיךָ]; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Compare Psalms 5:11; 9:14; 32:11; 70:4.

The love for God is not restricted to the exuberance of joy and rejoicing, but frequently shows itself throughout the Psalter in the quiet wonder at God's gracious disposition toward man. Psalm 8 is the Psalter's best example







live: I will sing praise to my God while I have any being.

My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.

Psalm 146:2 echoes this:

While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

Compare Psalms 7:17; 9:1-2; 34:1 92:1-2. The praise and thankfulness with which the psalmists express their love for God are shown quite frequently to be responses to the favor of God. Psalm 106:1 exhorts to praise and thanksgiving because of God's love:

Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy [loving-kindness: יְרֻחֵם ] endureth for ever.

This expression is repeated in Psalms 107:1; 118:1, 29; and throughout Psalm 136. Psalm 30:1 speaks of praise as a result of God's deliverance:

I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

Compare Psalm 28:7. Psalm 13:6 praises God for the blessings of life:

I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 66:8-9 repeats this thought:

O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:  
Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

Most important of all, this loving praise of God is stirred up in man by the lovingkindness that God bestows on him, as



is seen in Psalm 63:3-4,

Because thy lovingkindness is better than  
life, my lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee while I live: I  
will lift up my hands in thy name.

Psalm 66:20 blesses God for His lovingkindness:

Blessed be God, which hath not turned away  
my prayer, nor his mercy [lovingkindness: יִרְחֶמֶן] ]  
from me.

Compare Psalm 117:1-2. The familiar Venite in Psalm 95 ex-  
horts to song and thanksgiving because "He is our God!"

Praise is stimulated by the realization of fellowship with  
God: Verses 1-2, 6-7a,

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us  
make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanks-  
giving, and make a joyful noise unto him with  
psalms.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us  
kneel before the LORD our maker.

For he is our God; and we are the people of  
his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

The same stimulus for praise is given in Psalm 118:28,

Thou art my God, and I will praise thee:  
thou art my God, I will exalt thee.

Closely connected with this expression of love by means of  
praise and thanksgiving is the expression of love by means  
of their formal worship and the ritual sacrifices. The  
love for God is reflected in the psalmist's love for the  
temple, the place where God is worshipped, in Psalm 26:8,

LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy  
house, and the place where thine honor [or, glory:  
יְהוָה] dwelleth.

Psalm 122:1 has a like thought:



I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

Worship, then, is not a ritualistic duty, but a thing of joy to the faithful of God, done in response to God's love and fellowship. For this reason, the Psalter contains frequent echoes of the prophets' condemnation of false sacrifices that were done not in response to God's love, but as a ritualistic duty or in the hope of earning favor with God. Psalm 51:16-17 is one of the clearest expressions of the need for a contrite heart in the worship of God:

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Psalm 50:8-15 is even more forceful in its condemnation of ritualistic sacrifice. God wants the worship of a loving heart responding to the love of God:

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offering, to have been continually before me [or, which have been continually before me:  $\text{לְפָנַי} \text{ ' } \text{לְפָנַי}$ ].

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

Offer [sacrifice:  $\text{זָבַח}$ ] unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalm 69:30-31 speaks of praise and thanksgiving as more



pleasing to God than a sacrifice, indicating that sacrifice by itself is worthless without the response of love in the heart:

I will praise the name of God with a song,  
and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

This also shall please the LORD better than  
an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

Compare Psalms 40:6-8; 107:22; 141:2. But with the proper motivating spirit, sacrifice and formal worship do serve as a means whereby the faithful of God expressed their love to Him. Thus Psalm 27:6 speaks of sacrifice as a sacrifice of joy for deliverance from the enemy:

And now shall mine head be lifted up above  
mine enemies round about me; therefore will I  
offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will  
sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Likewise Psalm 66:13-15 speaks of sacrifices given in response to their deliverance from trouble:

I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:  
I will pay thee vows,

Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth  
hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of  
fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer  
bullocks with goats.

Psalm 116 speaks of the sacrifice of thanksgiving and the paying of vows in response to all the benefits showed them by the LORD: Verses 12, 17-18,

What shall I render unto the LORD for all  
his benefits toward me?

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of  
thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of  
the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in



the presence of all his people.

Psalm 54:6 promises frequent sacrifice, but note that it is not sacrifice for its own sake, but a sacrifice for the sake of showing forth the praise of God:

I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD, for it is good.

Psalm 96:8 expresses a similar thought, bringing offerings to God to give Him glory:

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

The third manifestation of the psalmists' love for God is their testimony to others, Jew and Gentile alike, of the love and mercy of God. The Psalter expresses this frequently. Psalm 22:22-23 serves as an example of the love for God erupting into exhortation to the psalmist's brethren to praise, fear, and glorify God:

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Ye that fear the LORD, praise him: all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

Psalm 18:49 has the psalmist praising God among the nations, and thereby bearing witness to them of God's love:

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen [nations: גוֹיִם], and sing praises unto thy name.

Psalm 67:1-2 prays for the blessing of God as a testimony to the nations:

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon earth, thy



saving health among all nations.

Psalm 105:1-2 exhorts Israel to bear witness to the love of God:

O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people [peoples: אֲבוֹתַי].  
Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Compare Psalm 108:3. Psalm 119:46 has the tone of a dedicated missionary:

I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

There are very many such passages in the Psalter; these will suffice as examples.

This is the response of love and its three manifestations. But it is very important to note that this response of love completes the circle of fellowship with God, for it is to love that God gives Himself in fellowship. Psalm 91:14-16 states this most clearly:

Because he hath set his love upon me [cleaves to me: אֲשַׁרְךָ], therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him.

Psalm 37:4 exhorts man to a love of God, for to this love is given the favor of God and the fellowship with Him that this favor represents:

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Psalm 145:20 reveals that God gives life and fellowship to



those that love Him:

The LORD preserveth all them that love him:  
but all the wicked will he destroy.

Love for God, then, is the deep joy and happiness that is produced in those who experience the love of God and fellowship with Him. This love erupts in praise and thanksgiving to God, in formal worship, and in testimony to others. This love completes the circuit of fellowship with God, since it is to the response of love that God gives Himself and His grace.

The third major response to the love of God is that of obedience, in which the faithful of God, stirred to the depths of their being by God's love and the life with God that they have in this love, dedicate themselves to live to the best of their ability in harmony with the fellowship into which God has taken them. This is to live in obedience to God. It is essential to realize that the psalmists did not view obedience as an act wrought by the will of man that earned the favor and fellowship with God. Obedience is a gift that God gives to man. Psalm 23:3 is one of the most beautiful expressions of this. The whole psalm speaks of God's care and love, and this verse includes obedience, or righteousness, in the providence of God:

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in  
the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalm 43:3 calls out to God for that obedience which will



give him access to the tabernacle and to God:

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

Psalm 23:3 prays for obedience with the negative plea for deliverance from the way of the wicked:

Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts.

Further examples of the fact that obedience is God-given can be seen in the many passages in which the psalmists ask God for instruction. God must teach them, they cannot learn it for themselves. God must give the righteousness with which they are to walk in the fellowship with God.

Psalm 143 asks for instruction with the consciousness that the will of God must be done by those who belong to God: Verses 8 and 10,

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God.

Psalm 25:4-5 shows even more clearly that the psalmists want to be obedient because of their fellowship with God. Note well that in this passage the psalmist does not seek simply the appearance of goodness than an external observance of laws can give, but a deepening and completion of the fellowship that he has with the God of his salvation. He wants to walk with God in His ways, and to this end requests instruction:



Shew me [make me to know: יְהַרְרֵנִי] thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalm 32:8 promises that God will teach and guide His own with His eye, which can, of course, be seen only by those who are in fellowship with Him and thus have His eye always before them:

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalm 119 contains many petitions for instruction, showing that obedience is a gift of God: Verse 12,

Blessed art thou, O LORD, teach me thy statutes.

Verse 18,

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Verse 27,

Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

Compare verses 33, 34, 68, 73, 108, 124, 135, 169. Also Psalms 27:11 and 86:11. The obedience through instruction that God gives man is given by means of His Word, the law.

Psalm 17:4 speaks of this:

Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

Psalm 94:12 is more explicit:

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law.



Psalm 119 repeats it three times: Verse 9,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

Verse 11,

Thy word have I had in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Verse 105,

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

A few instances in the Psalter clearly reveal that obedience to the will of God came in recognition of, and in response to, the fellowship with God. Psalm 78 speaks of God making a covenant with Israel so that, in verse 7,

They might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Psalm 26:3 closely connects the lovingkindness of God with obedience, making obedience a response to God's love:

For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

In a negative manner, Psalm 66:18 shows that the psalmist seeks to be obedient in order that he might be in such fellowship with God that his prayer will be heard:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me.

Since obedience, given by God, is a response in man to the love of God and the fellowship with Him, it follows that obedience is not based on a grudging heart that seeks by obedience to earn the blessing of God but is based on a free and willing heart that seeks by obedience to abide in



that fellowship with God. The very first psalm, in describing the righteous man, makes the law of God and, by inference, obedience to it a thing of delight: Verse 2,

But his delight is in the law of the LORD;  
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalm 40:8 also speaks of this delight in obeying the law of God, and adds that it has become a part of the psalmist's very being:

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea,  
thy law is within my heart [bowels: <sup>וֶבְרֵאֵר</sup>].

Psalm 119 again has several passages revealing obedience as coming from a free and willing heart: Verse 69,

The proud have forged a lie against me:  
but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.

Verse 103,

How sweet are thy words unto my taste!  
yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Verse 167,

My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and  
I love them exceedingly.

Compare verses 2, 34, 97, 127.

Since obedience is a response to the love of God, it is not done in the flippant manner of one who must do something in order to obtain a desired end, but is done in what the Old Testament calls the "fear" of God, i.e., in awe and reverence before the eternal God. Psalm 96:4-5 describes the fear of God as awe before the Creator:

For the LORD is great, and greatly to be  
praised: he is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the nations are idols:



but the LORD made the heavens.

Psalm 76:7 reveals man full of respect and reverence before the holiness of God:

Thou, even thou, art to be feared [fearful, i.e., terrible: אֲדַרְאָה]; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

Psalm 119:120 has the same thought:

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Psalm 9:20 describes the fear of God as humility before God's power:

Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men.

With this understanding of the fear of God, the psalmist in Psalm 2:11 exhorts the kings of the earth to serve the LORD, i.e., be obedient to Him, not in a flippant or careless manner, but in fear and trembling:

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Psalm 4:4 exhorts man to be submissive and obedient to God not because he must or because he wants to earn something from God, but because he stands in awe before God's glory and majesty and knows that he is living with that God:

Stand in awe [tremble ye: אֲדַרְאָה, either in anger or in fear. In this context it certainly means fear. The translation, "stand in awe" is very good], and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

Psalm 5:7 speaks of worship in the larger sense of the worship of an obedient life, and bases this obedience on the fear of God that springs from God's love:



But as for me, I will come into thy house  
in the multitude of thy mercy [lovingkindness:  
रत्नोपम]: and in thy fear will I worship toward  
thy holy temple.

Since obedience is a response to the mercy of God, arrogance has no part in it. Rather obedience is often connected with humility and repentance. In Psalm 19:12-13 the psalmist confesses his sins to be more than he can know and asks for their forgiveness in the same breath with which he asks for freedom from sin and for obedience:

Who can understand his errors? cleanse  
thou me from secret faults.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

In Psalm 25:7, in a context of petition for obedience (verse 5) and testimony that God teaches sinners "in the way" (verse 9), the psalmist confesses his sins, pleading the love and goodness of God:

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy [lovingkindness: रत्नोपम] remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Psalm 130:4 gives further evidence that the psalmists were humble and repentant in order to be obedient:

But there is forgiveness with thee, that  
thou mayest be feared.

As God's fellowship is given to those who trust and love God in response to His love, so the favor and fellowship of God is given to those who are upright, righteous, and obedient in response to His love. The Psalter has very much



to say in this connection, so much, in fact, that it sometimes appears that God's grace is not given as a gift to those who respond to His love with obedience, but is given as a reward to those who earn it by righteous living. Therefore it is essential that what has been said previously concerning obedience be kept in mind, that it is given by God, that it is a response to God's love, that it is based on a free and willing heart, on a fear of God, and on the humility of repentance. This obedience closes, as it were, the circle of fellowship with God and as such receives the blessings of this fellowship. Compare Psalms 18:25-27; 125:4. This is not true for the wicked whose disobedience frustrates the love that God offers. Hence there are many passages that speak of love for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. But the righteous do not earn their love of God; they simply do not reject it as do the wicked. The contrast in Psalm 11:5, 7 is a good example of this:

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright [the upright shall behold His face: יִדְּוֹן יִשְׁרָאֵל וְיִשְׁרָאֵל יִשְׁרָאֵל].

Psalm 34:15-16 says the same thing:

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

Compare Psalms 1:6; 7:9; 81:11-16; 119:155. In the same way



the righteous are given deliverance, as in Psalm 97:10-12,

Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Compare Psalms 7:10; 64:10; 68:3; 119:94, 116, 153. Because God delivers the righteous in His grace, the psalmists occasionally plead their own righteousness as evidence of their fellowship with God. Psalm 26:1-3 is a good example of this, in which the psalmist pleads his own integrity as evidence that he is in the lovingkindness of God:

Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

Psalm 25:21 connects integrity with the dependence on God that marks those who respond to God's love:

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Compare Psalms 7:8; 41:12; 86:2-3; 101:2; 119:8, 166. The obedient are also given the blessing of God that comprehends all the good things of life. Psalm 55:22 speaks of God's holding the righteous firm in their prosperity:

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

Psalm 73:1 speaks of the goodness of God to the clean of heart:



Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

Psalm 84:11 promises all good things to the upright:

For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Compare Psalms 5:12; 37:18, 22-23, 27, 29; 106:2-3; 119:1.

Thus even the fellowship of God is given to those who by their obedience give evidence of their response to God's love. Psalm 140:13 says it precisely:

Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Psalm 15:1-5 spells it out more carefully, using the picture of the physical abiding in the tabernacle for the spiritual fellowship with God:

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?  
who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.

In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Compare Psalm 24:3-5.

Better evidence to show that the blessing of God is not given as a reward for obedience, but is given by God to those who by obedience enter into the reception of His grace, is offered by the many passages that speak of God's grace given to those who fear Him. But fear is not an act that



deserves reward. Hence it is not an act that is rewarded, but it is an attitude of reverence and humility before God in response to God's love that receives His favor gratuitously. Psalm 31:19-20 speaks of this:

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

Thou shalt hide them in the secret [covert:  $\text{סֵתֶר}$ ] of thy presence from the price [snares:  $\text{כֶּסֶף}$ ] of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Psalm 25:13-14 offers equally as much to fear:

His soul shall dwell at ease [lodge in goodness:  $\text{לֵבָאֵלֶיךָ}$ ]; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

The secret [or counsel, hence friendship:  $\text{סֵתֶר}$ ] of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them [make them to know:  $\text{יִגְדֶלֵם}$ ] his covenant.

Psalm 34:9 provides all blessings to fear:

O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

Psalm 103:17-18 connects the keeping of the commandments with the fear of God and offers to this response the love of God:

But the mercy [lovingkindness:  $\text{רַחֲמֵיךָ}$ ] of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Compare verse 11; Psalm 112:1. Other passages that speak of God's grace bestowed on those who fear Him are Psalms 85:9; 128:1-4; 145:19.

Final evidence that the fellowship of God is given as



a gift to the obedient and not as a reward, is seen in such passages as Psalm 26:11 which connects uprightness with a plea for mercy, indicating that uprightness does not deserve the favor of God:

But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

Likewise Psalm 112:4 connects the gift of light to the upright not with their uprightness but with the love of God:

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

Also Psalm 119:174 connects obedience with longing for the salvation of God, not as something deserving of that salvation:

I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

In verse 77 the psalmist asks for the compassion of God, even though he keeps the law and does not demand His blessing because he keeps the law:

Let thy tender mercies [compassion:  $\text{חַסְדֵּי}$ ] come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Obedience, then, is a God-given response to the love and fellowship of God. It comes from a willing heart filled with the fear of God and with the humility of repentance. With those who manifest this response of obedience, thereby indicating acceptance of and submission to His love, God enters into fellowship with all the accompanying blessings.

These three attitudes, trust, love, and obedience, are



the responses which complete the circle of fellowship with God that His love began. Without them the circle of fellowship does not exist, for without these responses the love of God is rejected. Without the originating love and grace of God the circle of fellowship would not exist, for without that love there could be nothing in response. Though these responses in man are necessary for the completion of fellowship with God, yet they are always God-given, and thus the glory remains God's alone.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As was stated in the introduction and presented through the body of this thesis, the way of salvation is not expressed by the faithful of the Old Testament in the same way as it is in the New Testament. Their hope was not so explicitly aimed toward an eternal life and a heaven, nor was it based expressly on the vicarious atonement of the Christ. This is not to deny that the saints of God living under the Old Covenant have had and will have their salvation made perfect in the eternal life of which the New Testament speaks, nor is this to deny that their salvation both in time and in eternity was indeed attained only because of the sacrifice of Christ as it is revealed in the New Testament. But we must conclude on the basis of the Psalter that the faithful of God in the Old Testament did not regard salvation primarily in terms of a life to come, nor did they base their hope expressly on the vicarious satisfaction of the Christ.

Salvation was conceived of by the Old Testament faithful as a personal relationship to, or a fellowship with, the eternal and only true God. This fellowship was manifest to them during this life and upon this earth by such things as deliverance from the enemy and from all ill fortune and by good fortune in general. For them the



highest good was to live, but to live with God, i.e., in fellowship with Him, in His favor and love. Though they knew and spoke of death as the curse of God in which man was separated from Him, yet death did not cause them to despair nor to doubt the existence of their fellowship with God. This indicates a very real confidence on their part that their fellowship with the eternal God would be as eternal as He.

This fellowship that they had with God was not by any means based upon any good quality in man. Rather, this fellowship was based alone on the saving disposition of God. The faithful knew God to be a gracious God, a God of compassion and lovingkindness, a God whose love was faithful and reliable, and to this love they looked for the fellowship they knew they could not earn. They found evidence for the love of God toward them in the covenant relationship that God had established with them and in the deeds He did for them in that covenant. Personal evidence was found in God's protection and care throughout life. The king and all the promises connected with his throne, as well as the prophetic words regarding the day that Yahweh should come, gave evidence that that fellowship would be perfected in the future.

But God did not force man to enter into this fellowship with Him. Fellowship with God had its source and beginning in the saving disposition of God but its com-



pletion was found in the response of man. To the knowledge that God was a gracious and compassionate God of love, the faithful responded with trust, love, and obedience. These responses, produced in man by the power of God's love, completed and closed the circle of fellowship with God. Without the saving disposition of God there could be no response; without the response the love of God was rejected.

This, then, is the "Way of Salvation" as it is revealed in the Psalter. Essentially, it is the same as that revealed in the New Testament. The New Testament simply adds the revelation of the means whereby the holy God is merciful and compassionate to man--the cross of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. The response of man, his trust, love, and obedience, is spoken of in the New Testament in terms of faith. Immortality and eternal life with God is fully revealed in the New Testament whereas in the Old it is but a vague and personal hope. But the essential idea of "salvation" as a fellowship with God, originating in Him, and demanding a response from man, is the same in both testaments.



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