

Psalm 123. Carmarthen, 7 March 2010.

I suspect that Psalm 23 must rank as one of the best known and best loved of the psalms – if not as *the* best known and the best loved. But this afternoon I want to look with you, not at Psalm 23, but at Psalm 123 – which must, I suggest, rank as one of the least known of the psalms.

A song of degrees ('of ascents').

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon ('look to') the Lord our God, until that He have mercy upon us (literally, 'until He is gracious to us').

Have mercy upon us ('Be gracious to us'), O Lord, be gracious to us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

I suspect that some of you here will recognise the name 'Harold Wildish'. Mr Harold Wildish was a well-known preacher of a bygone day who spent most of his life as a missionary in Jamaica in the West Indies.

Mr Wildish once told of a fascinating conversation he had with an old Christian farmer who lived near Chichester. When out walking together, the farmer, Mr. Wyatt, with a twinkle in his eye, told Mr. Wildish, 'I was saved by my good looks'.

Mr Wildish laughed and asked what he meant. 'Well, it was like this', the farmer said, 'an evangelist came to town some years ago and asked if he could use my barn ... I agreed, and after he had been using it for a few days, my wife said ... 'Why don't you go ... and see what's happening down in the barn'. Mr. Wyatt told Mr. Wildish that the preacher spoke on three texts of scripture. The first was that of the Lord's own words from Isaiah chapter 45, verse 22, 'Look unto me, and be saved', from which the preacher spoke of the cross and the suffering of the Lord Jesus for sinful men and women. The preacher's second text was Hebrews 12 verse 2, 'Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God', from which he spoke of a risen Saviour who is able to meet all the 'daily needs' (as the old farmer expressed it) of the Christian.

The preacher's last text was Titus 2 verse 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ', from which he spoke of the second coming of Christ. Mr. Wildish said that, when the farmer had finished, 'I just put my arms around him and I said, '... now I understand how you were saved by your ... good looks'.

Yes, and just as that farmer, I too enjoy a salvation which covers the past, the present and the future ... for I too have looked to the Lord Jesus on the cross for my salvation from the penalty of sin ... I now look to Him sitting at the right hand of God for my present salvation from the power of sin ... and I look for His return when He will save me from the very presence of sin.

This afternoon I want us to direct our eyes, not so much backward – to the cross, as we do at least each Lord's Day morning – nor, as in effect we do so then also, forward to the promise of our Lord's return, but upward. And for that reason I have chosen Psalm 123.

Our psalm is the fourth of fifteen consecutive psalms which carry the title, 'A Song of Ascents' (rendered 'A Song of Degrees' in the KJV) – a collection which extends from Psalm 120 through to Psalm 134.

Some have linked these psalms with the homeward journey of the exiles from the Babylonian captivity, pleading that the actual word translated 'degrees' or 'ascents' occurs in Ezra 7 verse 9 – translated 'go up' – in direct connection with that return.¹ And certainly *some* of the sentiments expressed in several of the psalms would be appropriate for such an occasion.

But, personally, I take the view – shared by many commentators – that the title 'A Song of Ascents' points rather to these psalms having been sung during the three annual Jewish pilgrimages, when the pilgrims 'ascended' in procession to Jerusalem, nestling as it does among the mountains of Judea.² That is, these psalms comprise a kind of "Pilgrims' Praise" for travelling companies on their way to celebrate the three great feasts – of Passover/Unleavened Bread in the spring (March/April), of Pentecost in the early summer (May/June), and of Tabernacles in the autumn (September/October).³

This collection of fifteen psalms gives every appearance of being carefully compiled. That written by Solomon (Psalm 127) – one of only two psalms linked with Solomon in the whole of the Book of Psalms⁴ – stands central, flanked on each side by seven psalms, two of which in each case are titled ‘of David’ (namely, Psalms 122 and 124, and Psalms 131 and 133) – with the remaining five on either side remaining anonymous.⁵ It has been pointed out that the personal name of God (‘Jehovah’ or ‘Yahweh’) occurs the same number of times (24) in both sets of seven psalms. And I note that both sets begin and end with similar expressions ... the first set more or less opening with a reference to ‘lying lips’ and a ‘deceitful tongue’, Psa. 120. 2, and closing with a psalm which says ‘our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing’, Psa. 126. 2 ... and the second set both opening and closing with a psalm containing the benediction, ‘The Lord bless you out of Zion’.⁶

Not, I suggest, that the Songs of Ascents were *originally* composed with a view to forming part of a collection. I remind you, for example, that, although four of these Songs were written by David, one was written by Solomon ... and that we have no information about who wrote the remaining ten psalms – or when. I suspect that, initially, each of the individual psalms had its own unique and unconnected background, but that the Holy Spirit saw fit to bring these psalms together to serve as a suitable hymnbook for the use of pilgrims on their regular journeys to Jerusalem.

So, frankly, we haven’t a clue who wrote our psalm for today – or when.⁷ What we can safely say is that the psalm was written at a time when God’s people bore the brunt of the cruel taunts and mockery of those around them.

And, whenever it was written, God’s people clearly felt these jibes most keenly. I say ‘God’s people’ because, although the psalm opens with the words of an individual – possibly the song-leader – when we get to the close of verse 2, these words have become the expression of the people collectively – of the whole believing community ... as we switch from the ‘I’ and the ‘my’ of verse 1 to the ‘our’, the ‘us’, and the ‘we’ of verses 2 to 4.

And this might be a good time to say just a little about the structure of the psalm.

Our psalm breaks down neatly into two sections ... the first comprising verses 1 and 2, and the second, the remaining verses, verses 3 and 4.

It would be difficult to miss the key words of the psalm – (i) the word ‘eyes’, which occurs no less than four times in verses 1 and 2; (ii) the words ‘gracious to us’ (a more accurate rendering than the ‘mercy upon us’ of many translations) which appear three times – forming both the climax of the first section, and the launching pad for the second section; and (iii) the expression ‘exceedingly filled’ and (iv) the word ‘contempt’, both of these being found twice in verses 3 and 4, thereby binding those verses together.

The latter part of verse 3 and the whole of verse 4 paint a grim and depressing picture of the circumstances in which the people found themselves. It is clear that they were having to endure very real and very hurtful ridicule from the proud and arrogant people around them – something from which many of God’s people – young and old – are not free even today.

And the mockery, jibes and snide remarks which they suffered cut very deep.

‘We are exceedingly filled with contempt ... our soul is exceedingly filled with ... scorn’, they complain. To suffer bitter ‘contempt’ is bad ... to be ‘filled with’ it is worse ... but to be ‘exceedingly filled with’ it is by far the worst of all. Indeed, the word translated ‘filled’ means ‘to be satiated’ – to have more than enough. That is, the people describe the reproach which they suffered as food which had been rammed down their throats until they can stomach no more.

They had become, as the apostle Paul once described himself and his fellow-apostles, as the ‘filth of the world, the offscouring of all things’ – well rendered as the ‘garbage of the world, the scum of all’.⁸ ‘Enough is enough’, they say. They had been so belittled and ridiculed that they had taken all they could stand.

I have sometimes heard it said that ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me’. Well, I for one could never say that – and neither could the men and women who pour out their hearts to God in our psalm. The fact is that words *can* hurt and words *do* hurt.

The word rendered ‘at ease’ in verse 4 describes those who care nothing for either the judgement of God or the suffering of their fellowmen.

Well, what is someone to do when faced with such trouble and distress?

When commenting on this psalm, one American commentator, Warren Wiersbe, wrote, ‘If the outlook ... is disturbing, try the uplook’.⁹ Which is precisely what the psalmist and those he represented did!

Taking their eyes off their circumstances and their troubles – which at the time threatened to overwhelm them – they looked in the right direction – to Him ‘who dwells in the heavens’ – expressing their utter dependence upon Him and enlisting His aid.

Not long ago, my wife Linda and I went to visit our daughter Debra – and latest grand-child Carys – who live in Nailsea, just south of Bristol. When having something to eat in a restaurant close by, I spotted a leaflet advertising the nearby Cheddar Caves and Gorge. It was the leaflet’s slogan which grabbed my attention ... ‘Look up and wonder’. That’s it – ‘Look up and wonder’ ... look beyond all earthly circumstances to the heavenly throne.

If I understand the first verse of Psalm 121 correctly, the author of that psalm knew that he needed to look higher than the hills for his help. For, as I see it, the second part of that verse should be translated as a question – ‘*from where does my help come?*’¹⁰

I suspect that, as the pilgrim approached Jerusalem from afar, he would view the climb ahead with a measure of apprehension. For the mountains and hills around the holy city¹¹ not only provided a wall of defence for the city, but a dwelling-place for bandits and wild beasts. Well might the pilgrim ask, with trepidation, ‘From where does my help come?’ But he knows the answer. His help certainly does not come from the hills! His only source of help was the omnipotent Lord – the Maker of all there is¹² – able to meet his every need. And so, for his help, he looks, not to the hills around Jerusalem, but to the One who founded both Jerusalem and the mountains around it. Well did Jeremiah say in chapter 3 of his prophecy, ‘Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel’.¹³

The composer of our Psalm shared the conviction of the author of that Psalm ... and so lifted his ‘eyes’ – far above the hills to the transcendent Lord Himself – to the High and Lofty One, of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke, who inhabits eternity.¹⁴ – to the One of whom Psalm 47 speaks, who ‘reigns’ and who ‘sits’ (the same word rendered ‘dwell’ in verse 1 of our Psalm) ‘on His holy throne’.¹⁵

It was, of course, the fault of the ten spies sent to survey the land of Canaan that they did not lift their eyes high enough. For they saw the ‘problems and the difficulties’, namely, in their case, the giants and the towering walls, but they did not, as Joshua and Caleb, look up to the Lord far above them all.¹⁶

The word translated ‘dwell’ in verse 1 is correctly translated – the word means just that ... right from its first occurrence back in Genesis 4 – which speaks of Cain ‘*dwelling* in the land of Nod’.¹⁷ But, in the context here, when speaking of the One who ‘dwells in heaven’, it is perfectly legitimate to render the word freely as ‘enthroned’ – as do many modern translations ... ‘you who are enthroned in the heavens’! And what a tremendous comfort and encouragement to know that, even though the arrogant man vents his scorn on us – even though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us – ‘God is still on the throne’. And, through the period of biblical history, His servants were often given to see Him seated just there – I speak of the Old Testament prophets, Micaiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and of the New Testament apostle, John¹⁸ - each of whom was given a vision of what the writer to the Hebrews speaks of as ‘the throne of the majesty (‘the Greatness’) in the heavens’.¹⁹

‘We have no hope but in you’, the psalmist and the afflicted people of God are saying. Theirs is the faith which provides the conviction and the certainty of the things which cannot be seen with the natural eye.²⁰

When we focus our attention on our foes or our troubles, we get discouraged and afraid. But when we lift our eyes to the One who dwells in the heavens, *everything* changes.

One of the greatest evangelists which England has ever known was Mr John Wesley, the 18th century founder of the Methodist Church. It is said that, in the course of his itinerant ministry, Mr. Wesley travelled more than 250,000 miles, and preached more than 40,000 times. When he died, apart from a huge number of converts, he left behind him more than 540 itinerant preachers. I read recently that one of the most notable features of John Wesley’s life was his cheerfulness.

In 1755, when writing to a close friend, Ebenezer Blackwell, Mr. Wesley said of his travelling companions (for the most part not Christians) that, ‘If a dinner ill-dressed, a hard bed, a poor room, a shower of rain, or a dirty road, will put them out of humour, it lays a burden upon me greater than all the rest put together. By the grace of God, I never fret, I repine at nothing, I am discontented with nothing. And to hear persons at my ear fretting and murmuring at every thing is like tearing the flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon His throne and ruling all things well’.²¹

Yes, when we lift our eyes to the One who dwells in the heavens, *everything* changes.

And I think of One infinitely greater than Mr Wesley – of our Lord Himself – who knew all about the derision and scorn of many around Him – for He was, as the prophet foretold, ‘despised and rejected by men’²² – and how He felt it! ‘The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me’, He could say.²³

And doubtless the Saviour joined *with feeling* in the singing of this very psalm on His many journeys to Jerusalem at the time of the major festivals.

And we know too that it was customary for our Lord to pray with lifted eyes – as He did, for example, when giving thanks for food (as in the case of the so-called ‘Feeding of the 5,000’²⁴), when performing miracles (as in the case, not only of the raising of Lazarus²⁵ but of the healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment at the end of Mark chapter 7²⁶), and when simply praying – as He did at the close of His so-called ‘Upper Room Ministry’, when He ‘lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come’.²⁷

Not, of course, that we are required to pray always with our eyes open and lifted upwards. Our practice of closing our eyes can be extremely helpful in shutting out distractions. Although there are certainly occasions – such as driving the car – when it is wise to keep them open – though not, I would suggest, lifted to heaven – not unless, of course, we want to get there quickly!

I read sometime ago of what is probably the fastest goal scored in the history of soccer. Apparently, the goalkeeper for the Brazilian team Rio Preto let in a goal after only three seconds of the game. The ball had been passed to one of the outstanding forwards of the opposing team who sent the ball into the net with a powerful left-foot drive – narrowly missing the ear of the goalkeeper, who was still on his knees finishing his pre-match prayers!²⁸

But, *whether or not* we lift up our physical eyes when we pray, we can certainly lift up our eyes of faith to God and His throne.

In verse 2, God's people likened their utter dependence on God and their watchful expectation to that of household servants – both male and female on their master and mistress. As I see it, the context makes it clear that the image is not – as some suggest – that of servants (slaves) watching for a command given by means of a hand signal, but rather that of servants who look to the master or the mistress of the household for the supply of all their needs.²⁹

That is, I understand the ‘hand’ to be that which is opened to meet and supply the needs of the servant – who, by reason of his or her lowly status, is wholly dependent on his master or her mistress for his or her food, clothing and accommodation. As I see it, the domestic background to *the male servants* of verse 2 is to be found in our Lord's words in Luke 12, verse 42, ‘Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his master* will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?’, and the domestic background to the female servant is to be found in the words of King Lemuel³⁰ in Proverbs 31, verse 15, where he praises the ‘virtuous wife’ who ‘provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservant’.

I guess that the reason that the male servants are spoken of in the plural, and the maidservant in the singular is simply that, in a typical eastern household, male servants would have been more numerous – with duties which covered work in the fields as well as in the home – as we learn from our Lord's parable of the Unprofitable Servant in Luke 17³¹ – with a single maid being sufficient to assist her mistress – such a maid's service commencing perhaps, as was true in the cases of Leah and Rachel, at the time of her mistress's marriage.³²

And I note that very similar language is used of God, the ‘faithful Creator’, who opens His hand to supply the needs and to satisfy the desires of His creatures. This comes through not only in verses 24 to 28 of Psalm 104, but, more particularly, through verses 15 and 16 of Psalm 145. And I note especially the references to ‘eyes’ and to ‘hand’ – and the fact that, when we are told that God's opened hand ‘fills’ and ‘satisfies’, the same word is used there as is used in our psalm to describe the way in which His people are ‘filled’ (satiated) with the ridicule of their foes.

Day after day, His people have had a diet of scorn and hatred dished out by their enemies – now, in their helplessness and utter dependence, they raise their eyes imploringly to God to open His bountiful hand and to meet their need out of His limitless resources. I guess the Psalmist would have shared the sentiment expressed well over 2,000 years later by the great American President Abraham Lincoln, ‘I've been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go’.

At the opening of verse 3, conscious that they have no other help save God's, the godly in Israel besiege the heavenly throne-room with their pleas, ‘Be gracious to us, O Lord, be gracious to us’ – the word they use (three times in all, including the close of verse 2) generally describing the favour – the generous and unmerited action – shown freely to someone in need.³³

‘Our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He is gracious to us’, they say. I referred earlier to Psalm 121, verse 4 of which reads, ‘Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep’.

Israel's God was certainly not as the heathen around supposed *their* gods to be. You will remember that Elijah ‘mocked’ the prophets of Ba'al in 1 Kings 18 – taunting them to cry louder ... ‘for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened’.³⁴

'What', you might say, sleeping at noon?' – for noon it was. But I suspect that there was something very pointed to Elijah's proposal. For it seems that, according to their pagan myths, high and mighty Ba'al was thought to die in the autumn, when the dry season began, then lie dead all through the winter, before rising again in the spring when the rain returned.³⁵ Elijah may well have been suggesting that Ba'al might still be enjoying his *dry-season* nap³⁶ – and things *were certainly pretty dry!* – and that he needed a wake-up call!

But the author of Psalm 121 makes it clear that Israel's God never needs any wake-up call!

But if, according to Psalm 121, God keeps *His* ever-wakeful eye upon His people, according to our Psalm, *they* will keep their ever-watchful eyes upon Him – confidently waiting for Him to succour and save them ... although in what way, wisely neither the psalmist nor the people presume to dictate.

Just over ninety years ago,³⁷ a believer named Helen Lemmel³⁸ was given a small booklet by a missionary friend. The pamphlet, which was titled 'Focussed', contained the words, 'So then, turn your eyes upon Him, look full into His face and you will find that the things of earth will acquire a strange new dimness'. These words made a deep impression upon Helen Lemmel – inspiring her to pen a hymn, which begins, 'O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see? ... and which carries the chorus ... Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace'.³⁹

'Turn your eyes upon Jesus' ... look to the One who, having once suffered for our sins, has now been exalted to the very loftiest height.

And so, with our psalmist, whatever our circumstances, whatever problems and issues we face – whether of failing health, of financial difficulties, of family troubles, or whatever – no matter how wide and deep the rivers, so to speak, we have to cross, nor how high the mountains we have to climb – with our psalmist, let us *each* say ...**PP**...this afternoon, 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens'.⁴⁰

Footnotes

¹ Compare Ezra 2. 1; 7. 6-7.

² The verbal form of the word translated 'ascents' is used of pilgrimages for the annual feasts; e.g. Exod. 34. 24; 1 Sam. 1. 3, 7, 21, 22; 2. 19; cf. Jer. 31. 6; Mic. 4. 2. Compare Luke 2. 42 – the verb (*anabaino*) being the same as in the Septuagint of these passages. And see NIDOTTE, number 6590.

³ Exod. 23. 14-17; Deut. 16. 16. Note the reference to singing in Psalm 42. 4 and Isaiah 30. 29.

The word (correctly and literally) translated 'ascents' is used of 'steps/stairs' in Exod. 20. 26; 1 Kings 10. 19f; cf. 2 Kings 20. 9f; Amos 9. 6). The Vulgate renders the heading of the fifteen psalms, 'Song of the Steps'. Indeed, the Jewish Mishnah links the collection of fifteen songs with the fifteen steps of the temple (*Middoth* 2.5), where the Levites may have sung these songs of ascents. But this interpretation is now more or less discounted by scholars. Again, some connect the 15 psalms with the 15 words of the priestly blessing in Num 6. 24-26. The four key words used in the blessing occur throughout these psalms. And yet again, some suggest that these 15 psalms were compiled by Hezekiah as a memorial of his experience of verifying, through the reversal of the sundial, God's promise of 15 additional years of life (2 Kin. 20:1–11). Such plead the use of the same Hebrew term for "ascent" or "degree" in the psalms and in the story of the "degrees" on the sundial in 2 Kings.

⁴ Psalm 72 is the other.

⁵ The so-called 'orphan psalms'.

⁶ Psa. 128. 5; 134. 3. It may be that the three opening psalms – those before the psalm for this morning – have been structured so as to convey the idea of movement and progression – tracing the journeying of the pilgrim from his distant home and hostile circumstances right through to his arrival at the city of Jerusalem. The first psalm, Psalm 120, that is, could be viewed as picturing the point of the pilgrim's departure, expressing both (i) his prayer for deliverance from those among whom he dwells, and (ii) his sad lament, 'Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech [MEESHECH], that I dwell among the tents of Kedar [KEHDAR]! My soul has dwelt too long with him who hates peace', Psa. 120. 5-6. This is followed in Psalm 121 by the acknowledgment and assurance of the Lord's watchful and protective care as the pilgrim pursues his arduous and at-times perilous journey ... 'He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber ... The Lord shall keep you from all evil', Psa. 121. 3, 7. With all coming to a climax in Psalm 122 when the pilgrim finally arrives at Jerusalem, rejoicing at the invitation to approach the house of God; 'I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord". Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!', Psa. 122. 1-2.

⁷ True, some of the words we find in the psalm would be perfectly consistent with it having been written in the days of Nehemiah. For example, Nehemiah speaks of the 'the God in heaven', of the contempt and scorn of the Samaritans (using in Neh. 2. 19 and 4. 1 the same word as is found in Psa. 123. 4), and of God's 'hand', Neh. 2. 8. 18. But this is far from conclusive.

⁸ 1 Cor. 4. 14.

⁹ 'Prayer, Praise and Promises', Back to the Bible, 1992, day 320.

¹⁰ 'Some have tried to interpret [יָיָהּ] as a relative particle introducing the statement "from where my help comes" (as in the KJV), thus affirming that the mountains are a source of help. However, this is not an exegetical possibility. The term is a compound of יָיָהּ, "where?" which clearly carries an interrogative idea', David G. Barker, *The Lord watches over you: a pilgrimage reading of Psalm 121*, Bibliotheca Sacra 152 (April-June 1995): 163-81.

¹¹ Neh. 11. 1; Isa. 48. 2; 52. 1.

¹² The Lord is not to be ranked with the heathen gods 'that have not made the heavens and the earth', Jer. 10. 11.

¹³ Jer. 3. 23.

¹⁴ Isaiah 57. 15.

¹⁵ Psa. 47. 8.

¹⁶ Num. 13. 28-33.

¹⁷ Gen. 4. 16. It is a very common verb, occurring 1,090 times.

¹⁸ Micaiah said, 'Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left', 1 Kings 22. 19. Isaiah recorded, 'In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple', Isa. 6. 1. Ezekiel wrote, 'And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone', Ezek. 1. 26. And John reported, 'Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne', Rev. 4. 2.

¹⁹ Heb. 8. 1.

²⁰ Heb. 11. 1.

21

To Ebenezer Blackwell,
Redruth
31 August, 1755.

Dear Sir,

Experience confirms your advice both ways. In my last journey into the North, all my patience was put to the proof again and again; and all my endeavours to please, yet without success. In my present journey I leap as broke from chains. I am content with whatever entertainment I meet with, and my companions are always in good humour

'because they are with me.' This must be the spirit of all who take journeys with me. If a dinner ill dressed, or hard bed, a poor room, a shower of rain, or a dusty road will put them out of humour, it lays a burthen upon me greater than all the rest put together. By the grace of God I never fret, I repine at nothing I am discontented with nothing. And to hear persons at my ear fretting and murmuring at every thing is like tearing the flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon His throne and ruling all things well. Although, therefore, I can bear this also -- to hear His government of the world continually found fault with (for in blaming the things which He alone can alter we in effect blame Him); yet it is such a burthen to me as I cannot bear without pain, and I bless God when it is removed.

The doctrine of a Particular Providence is what exceeding few persons understand -- at least, not practically, so as to apply it to every circumstance of life. This I want, to see God acting in everything and disposing all for His own glory and His creatures good. I hope it is your continual prayer that you may see Him, and love Him more, and glorify Him with all you are and all you have! Peace be with you all!

I am, dear sir,
Your affectionate servant.
John Wesley

Source ... :

http://64.233.183.132/custom?q=cache:Zq5fxbZ_HXIJ:wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/letters/1755.htm+see+God+sitting+throne&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=5&safe=vss.

²² Isa. 53. 3.

²³ Rom. 15. 3 with Psa. 69. 9.

²⁴ Matt. 14. 19.

²⁵ John 11. 41.

²⁶ Mark 7. 34.

²⁷ John 17. 1.

²⁸ 'The Book of Heroic Failures', page 105.

²⁹ The Psalmist could have made just one comparison, but he makes two – thereby emphasizing the point.

³⁰ I know of no evidence that this was a pen-name for Solomon.

³¹ See especially Luke 17. 7-8.

³² See Gen. 29. 24, 29.

³³ 'Generally, this word implies the extending of "favour", often when it is neither expected nor deserved', *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 'Generally ... descriptive of beneficent actions that are freely offered or received and contribute to the well-being of another ... It is active kindness or generosity exhibited particularly toward those in need', *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. The usual Hebrew word for 'mercy' or 'pity' is 'racham'; see Girdlestone, *Synonyms*, pages 108-109. Although the LXX does translate 'chesed' by 'eleos' in 135 passages.

³⁴ 1 Kings 18. 27.

³⁵ Menander of Ephesus, a historian of the second century B.C., reports that Hiram, the King of Tyre³⁵ had actually introduced a ritual ceremony specifically for 'the wakening of (Ba'al)'. See Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 8, chapter 5, paragraph 3 – 'he was the first to celebrate the awakening (*egersis*) of Heracles in the month Peritius' - Whiston's translation incorrectly has "first set up the temple of Heracles in ..". Heracles was almost certainly one and the same as Melkart, the Ba'al of Tyre. <http://www.economicexpert.com/a/Melqart.htm>

³⁶ Indeed, perhaps he had overslept!

³⁷ In 1918.

³⁸ She moved with her parents from the UK to the US at age of 12. She had been staying with a missionary friend who had shared with her a gospel tract by Lillias Trotter, titled "Focused." The pamphlet included the statement: "So then, turn your eyes upon Him, look full into His face and you will find that the things of earth will acquire a strange new dimness." The words seemed to repeat themselves over and over in her mind during the following week. In her memoirs she reports the following: 'Suddenly, as if commanded to stop and listen, I stood still, and singing in my soul and spirit was the chorus, with not one conscious moment of putting word to word to make rhyme, or note to note to make melody. The verses were written the same week, after the usual manner of composition, but nonetheless dictated by the Holy Spirit'.

³⁹ <http://www.bjproductions.com/turneyes.html>

⁴⁰ 'The Lord on high is mightier than ...[anything]', Psa. 93. 4.