

**'I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks about me', Psalm 40. 17.<sup>1</sup>**  
**Bethesda Coffee Morning. 3 September 2014.**

This morning we continue our talks based on some of the Psalms. The set psalm for this morning – Psalm 40 – is reasonably long, and I shall therefore limit our reading to the beginning and the end. The opening verses read:

I waited patiently for the Lord; He heard my cry. He brought me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock ... He put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God

And the closing verses read:

Let those who love your salvation say continually, 'Great is the Lord!' As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks about me.

And I want to focus this morning on those words of David in the last verse,<sup>2</sup> 'As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks about me'.

The expression 'poor and needy' is fairly common in the psalms<sup>3</sup>, describing someone who is brought low and who is passing through difficult times. Often it is used of the people of God in general. So that, for example, one of the later psalms pleads, 'Rescue the poor and needy; deliver *them* out of the hand of the wicked'.<sup>4</sup> David had proved many times that *men around* often ignore – and even exploit – the poor and needy, but he was assured that *the Lord* never overlooks them.

But my text happens to be the first of four instances where David uses the phrase of himself personally, 'As for *me*, I am poor and needy'.<sup>5</sup> On this occasion he immediately follows up his sense of weakness and helplessness with his expression of confident trust in God; 'but the Lord thinks about me'.

And that is no less true today – whether we think of a believer fiercely persecuted for his or her faith in some Communist, Hindu or Muslim land, or, possibly, of someone here this morning who is carrying some heavy burden of concern about their family, their friends or themselves.

One modern translation of the Bible<sup>6</sup> renders my text, 'I am poor and needy, but the Lord is thinking about me *right now*'. And what a staggering thought that is ... that, if we truly know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, although He is exalted to the very highest place in heaven, His thought is directed towards us – towards us as individuals – and that right now. That is, the Christian's Great High Priest (the Lord Jesus), raised and seated at the right hand of God, is thinking about each individual believer at this very moment.

God willing, next Monday evening some of us will be considering the assurance which the apostle Paul gave to the early Christians at Rome, that our Lord Jesus (and I quote) 'is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us'.<sup>7</sup> And in marked contrast to the long succession of Jewish High Priests who served through Old Testament days, the New Testament reports that our Lord Jesus 'is able to save to the uttermost (is able to save both entirely and forever) those who draw near to God through Him, because He always lives to make intercession for them'.<sup>8</sup>

On more than one occasion, the Bible tells us that the Lord calls and knows each of the stars by name.<sup>9</sup> No doubt *in terms of mere numbers* that is far more impressive than, as the Bible also assures us, the Lord likewise knows the names of each of His people – that the Good Shepherd knows the names of each of His sheep. But, in truth, the Lord's knowledge of the names of each of His people is far more meaningful and far more precious.<sup>10</sup>

And I rejoice to know that, according to my Bible, not only *is* the Lord thinking about me now – He was thinking about me even before I was born. The author of our psalm, David, made that very clear. 'You formed my inward parts' he wrote in a later psalm, '... in my mother's womb ... when I was being made in secret ... your eyes saw my as-yet unformed substance'.<sup>11</sup>

But I can go back before then. For *the Lord was thinking about me almost 2,000 years ago when He suffered, and endured the Cross*. The apostle Paul spoke of 'the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*'.<sup>12</sup> Some of us have sometimes marvelled that the Lord Jesus thought at that time, as the gospels assure us He did, about the soldiers, about the dying malefactor and about His mother. But the wonder of it to me is that He was then thinking about me too!<sup>13</sup>

But I can go back before that, for *not only was He thinking about me then – the Lord Jesus was thinking about me when, over thirty years before, He had entered the world – when He had exchanged His royal robe, His glorious throne, and His heavenly palace for swaddling clothes, a rough feeding trough, and an animals' shelter.* And why, pray, did He come into our world? Yes, it is true, of course, that He came to do God's will. We read just now from the opening and the close of Psalm 40, but several of the verses between<sup>14</sup> are quoted in the New Testament as having been fulfilled in the experience of our Lord. And there (in the New Testament) we read, 'When He came into the world, He said (quoting from our psalm), "a body you have prepared for me. Then I said, 'Behold, I have *come ... to do your will, O God*"'.<sup>15</sup> But then we know well that – as an essential part of that will – He came to save sinners. For we read 'that Christ Jesus *came into the world to save sinners*'.<sup>16</sup> And *I* was *one* of the sinners He came to save. So, yes, He was thinking about me when He came!

But I can push far back before even that. For not only was He thinking about me when He entered the world – He was thinking about me before He had even made the world. For make it He did. The opening paragraph of John's gospel tells us plainly of the Saviour, 'All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made'.<sup>17</sup> Yes, every star in a billion galaxies in space... every grain of sand on all the beaches of earth ... all things were made by Him. But my Bible tells me that He was thinking about me before the very foundation of the world.<sup>18</sup>

I cannot go any further back, but I do know that He not only was thinking about me in the dateless past, but that the Lord Jesus will think about me throughout eternal ages to come. For, again I have the authority of God's word behind me when I say of every true believer in Christ that 'we shall always be with the Lord'. As one old hymn expresses it most beautifully, 'He and I, in that bright glory, one deep joy shall share – mine, to be for ever with Him; His, that I am there'.<sup>19</sup>

If you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, you can take away with you this morning the assurance that, whatever load and burden you bare – whatever mountain you may ever have to climb – whatever river you may ever have to cross – the Lord is thinking about *you* – that He always has, and He always will.

Remember then our text from Psalm 40, 'As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks about me'.

*Prayer:*

*Lord, I marvel that :*

*When you created a billion galaxies, you thought about me.*

*When you stepped from the heavenly realm and became flesh, you thought about me.*

*When you gave yourself, enduring the cross and its shame, you thought about me.*

*When I was still in my mother's womb, you thought about me.*

*Now, today, my Great High Priest at the right hand of God, you think about me.*

*When you come again – and throughout eternal ages, you will still think about me.*

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew underlying my text is ambiguous. On the one hand, it may express David's desire; that is, 'Let the Lord be mindful of me', NASB, or, 'May the Lord think of me', NIV. On the other hand, and far more likely in my view, it may express David's confidence and assurance – as the majority of English translations, ancient and modern – that 'the Lord thinks about me – that He 'thinks of me' – that He 'takes thought for me', ESV. I note the Greek Old Testament renders the last clause, 'The Lord will take thought of me, will consider me, will concern Himself with me'.

<sup>2</sup> Our psalm for this morning is 'A psalm of David'. From what I can tell, it was written some time when David was an outlaw and fugitive, fleeing from King Saul - but of the precise time or circumstances I know nothing.

<sup>3</sup> See Psa. 35. 10; 37. 14; 72. 13; 74. 21; 82. 4; 109. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Psa. 82. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Psa. 70.5; 86.1; 109.22.

<sup>6</sup> The Living Bible.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 8. 34. And the wonderful thing is that He does it for us as individuals. We are told in the gospels that on one occasion Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Behold, Satan has desired to have you (plural – the apostles collectively), that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you (singular – Peter individually), that your faith fail not', Luke 22. 31-32.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. 7. 23-25. In the picture language of the OT, our names are on both His breast and His shoulder. 'Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial ... Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgement upon his heart, when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually', Exod. 28.12, 29.

The names on the two shoulder stones probably differed from the names on the breastplate. The names of the tribes on the shoulders were 'according to their birth', Exod. 28.10, and would therefore have included Levi and Joseph. The names on the breastplate were 'according to the twelve tribes', Exod. 28.21, and would therefore have probably included the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) separately. Because the breastplate followed the 'tribal' classification, no mention was made of Levi; compare Numb. 10.14-28.

<sup>9</sup> 'He appoints the number of the stars; he calls them all by their names', Psa. 147.4; cf. Isa. 40.25-26.

<sup>10</sup> Compare, 'He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out', John 10.2-3; 'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine', John 10.14.

'Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us', Heb. 9.24.

<sup>11</sup> Psa. 139. 13-16. Listen to Jeremiah, 'Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you', Jer. 1. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Gal. 2. 20.

<sup>13</sup> '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', Heb. 12.2. And I am part of that joy!

<sup>14</sup> Psa. 40. 6-8.

<sup>15</sup> Heb. 10. 5-10.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Tim. 1. 15.

<sup>17</sup> John 1. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Eph. 1. 4. 'We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called ...', Rom. 8.28-30. That word 'foreknew' is the same as we find in 1 Peter 1 of the Lord Jesus, 'you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot – foreknown before the foundation of the world, but made manifest in these last times for you', 1 Pet. 1.18-20. Before the world began, God had His Son in view and in mind – as the Redeeming Lamb – and He had me in view and in mind also as one of those who would come into the good of Christ's redeeming work. What a breathtaking thought! He thought about me – He brought me into focus – He knew me with tender affection and special favour – He caught me up in the sweep of His vast and eternal purpose – He thought about me before 'the beginning', before He created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>19</sup> From the hymn, '*Midst the darkness, storm and sorrow*', by Gerhardt Ter Steegen. (Hymns of Light and Love, number 184.)