

**PSALMS OF
THE SOCIAL LIFE**

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Psalms of the social life by Cleland Boyd McAfee

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CLELAND BOYD MCAFEE

**PSALMS OF
THE SOCIAL LIFE**

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EVERYDAY LIFE SERIES

3 Psalms of the Social Life

CLELAND BOYD McAFEE

*Author of "The Greatest English Classic,"
"Mosaic Law in Modern Life," Etc.*

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CHAPTER I

The Songs of a Thousand Years

The book of the Psalms is the best known book in the Bible. That is because it is the most complete expression of human life in literature. It ranges all moods. No man can seek the expression of any mood without finding terms for it here. From the depths of despair he can cry for help; in rage at injustice, in the pain of betrayal by friends, in doubt of God's goodness, in assurance of his unfailing love, feeling himself wrong or wronged, seeing the world as going to ruin or seeing it as working out a plan of good, wanting inspiration to serve his fellowmen better or wanting refuge from their demands, fearing the future or hoping for it, in depression or in exultation—whatever mood any man cares to express is here. Calvin says: "All griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, and anxieties, in short all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed—the Holy Spirit hath here represented to the life." It is a literature of insight.

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day

Bless Jehovah, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless Jehovah, 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;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
Jehovah executeth righteous acts,
And judgments for all that are oppressed.

—Psalms 103: 1-6.

This is a psalm in the mood of *personal exultation*. It is a mood not brought about by absence of disturbing conditions. Anybody can be exultant when there is no reason for being otherwise. This mood is caused by becoming sure of the goodness that is in the world and in personal life because God is good. A laconic man was asked what is the chief requisite for making a pessimist, and he answered, "A poor memory." It takes a deal of forgetting to feel forsaken in the world. The popular song about counting our blessings suggests how impossible it is to do so. Imagine naming them "one by one"! We may not be able to list them in just the terms of this psalm, we may not have had these experiences at all; but the habit of tracing the blessings of life to their first cause in God is the best way of making this mood of personal exultation permanent. There are men who have a sense of eternal youth, feeling their power renewed constantly like the eagle, which every year, as this psalmist watched him, gained new plumage for his wings in place of the old. And such joy deepens when it is made social and we come to see that God's care covers all who need him, that he has no favorites, that he does injustice to no one. We say that misery loves company; it is not always true. But is it not always true that joy loves company? Is our mood ever worthy until we want the world to have such blessings as we have ourselves?

First Week, Second Day

Praise ye Jehovah.

Praise, O ye servants of Jehovah,

Praise the name of Jehovah.

Blessed be the name of Jehovah

From this time forth and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the
same

Jehovah's name is to be praised.

Jehovah is high above all nations,

And his glory above the heavens.

Who is like unto Jehovah our God,

That hath his seat on high,

That humbleth himself to behold

The things that are in heaven and in the earth?

—Psalm 113: 1-6.

This is an instance of the mood of *national exultation* like many other psalms. Notice the change of pronouns. Yesterday they were all singular number, though extending at the last to all who have similar experiences. Today they are plural. It is a social mood, in which the whole body of the servants of God is included. It is a wide mood also, covering all times and places: from the farthest east where the sun rises, to the farthest west where it sets, there is cause to praise God. The whole world looks bright in such a mood. It is good to be alive. And it is impossible to be narrow at such a time. One cannot claim God or his blessings as special possessions in which others cannot share. God is above all nations. His gifts are for all of them. Yet he is not so high that he is not also near. Some of the great people whom we know are as haughty as they are great. God's greatness is humble also. *We are always in danger of going to one extreme or the other about God. Sometimes we make him so great and far away that we cannot love him. Sometimes we make him so near that we cannot worship him.* He becomes so much the king that he is not the world's burden bearer; or else he becomes so much the burden bearer that he is no longer king. The national thought needs to be kept between the two extremes. But if the social mood is to recognize his true place, it must first be recognized in the personal mood of each of us.

First Week, Third Day

Be merciful unto me, O Lord;
 For unto thee do I cry all the day long.
 Rejoice the soul of thy servant;
 For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. . . .
 O God, the proud are risen up against me,
 And a company of violent men have sought after my
 soul, . . .
 Show me a token for good,
 That they who hate me may see it, and be put to shame.
 Because thou, Jehovah, hast helped me, and comforted me.
 —Psalm 86: 3, 4, 14, 17.

Today the mood is one of *personal depression*. Most of us know the mood. And the first thing to do when it comes is to find out what caused it. Sometimes it is purely phys-