

# 《The Treasury of David (Vol. 4)》 (C.H. Spurgeon)

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### Psalm 46

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician. He who could sing other Psalms so well was fitly entrusted with this noble ode. Trifles may be left to commoner songsters, but the most skilful musician in Israel must be charged with the due performance of this song, with the most harmonious voices and choicest music. For the Sons of Korah. One alone cannot fulfil the praise, there must be picked choristers under him, whose joyful privilege it shall be to celebrate the service of song in the house of the Lord. As to why the sons of Korah were selected, see our remarks at the head of Psalm 42. It may be well to add that they were a division of the Levites who took their turn in serving at the temple. All the works of holy service ought not to be monopolised by one order of talent, each company of believers should in due course enjoy the privilege. None ought to be without a share in the service of God.

A Song upon Alamoth. Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistine, it was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and happy strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill sounding instruments, as in 1Ch 15:20, where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord "with psalteries on Alamoth." We are not always, in a slovenly

manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music.

**SUBJECT.** Happen what may, the Lord's people are happy and secure, this is the doctrine of the Psalm, and it might, to help our memories, be called THE SONG OF HOLY CONFIDENCE, were it not that from the great reformer's love to this soul-stirring hymn it will probably be best remembered as LUTHER'S PSALM.

**DIVISION.** It is divided by inspired authority into three parts, each of which ends with Selah.

#### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *God is our refuge and strength.* Not our armies, or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks, and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valour of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word *our*; make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, "He is *my* refuge and strength." Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all sufficient, our defence and might are equal to all emergencies. *A very present help in trouble, or in distress he has so been found,* he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasized by the word *very* in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

"A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,  
Is God in time of danger;  
A shield and sword in every shock,  
From foe well known or stranger."

**Verse 2.** *Therefore.* How fond the psalmist is of therefores! his poetry is no poetic rapture without reason, it is as logical as a mathematical demonstration. The next words are a necessary inference

from these. *Will not we fear.* With God on our side, how irrational would fear be! Where he is all power is, and all love, why therefore should we quail? *Though the earth be removed,* though the basis of all visible things should be so convulsed as to be entirely changed. *And though the mountains be carried into the middle of the sea;* though the firmest of created objects should fall to headlong ruin, and be submerged in utter destruction. The two phrases set forth the most terrible commotions within the range of imagination, and include the overthrow of dynasties, the destruction of nations, the ruin of families, the persecutions of the church, the reign of heresy, and whatever else may at any time try the faith of believers. Let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust; since God remaineth faithful there can be no danger to his cause or people. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away in the last general conflagration, we shall serenely behold "the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, "for even then our refuge shall preserve us from all evil, our strength shall prepare us for all good.

**Verse 3.** *Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.* When all things are excited to fury, and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise, nor even of real force, she knows that the Lord stilleth the raging of the sea, and holdeth the waves in the hollow of his hand. *Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis, and is not to be moved by swelling seas. Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never to be dismayed. *Selah.* In the midst of such a hurly burly the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singers breath, and ourselves time for meditation. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves, and mountains rock, and oceans roar. Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage, we can calmly confront the danger, and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music; we do not suspend our song in alarm, but tune our harps again with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm. It were well if all of us could say, *Selah,* under tempestuous trials, but alas! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life song.

**Verse 4.** *There is a river.* Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilising, full, and never failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that there is such a river of God. *The streams whereof* in their various influences, for they are many, *shall make glad the*

*city of God*, by assuring the citizens that Zion's Lord will unfailingly supply all their needs. The streams are not transient like Cherith, nor muddy like the Nile, nor furious like Kishon, nor treacherous like Job's deceitful brooks, neither are their waters "naught" like those of Jericho, they are clear, cool, fresh, abundant, and gladdening. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact that in seasons of trial all sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure unto the end. The church is like a well ordered city, surrounded with mighty walls of truth and justice, garrisoned by omnipotence, fairly built and adorned by infinite wisdom: its burgesses the saints enjoy high privileges; they trade with far off lands, they live in the smile of the King; and as a great river is the very making and mainstay of a town, so is the broad river of everlasting love, and grace their joy and bliss. The church is peculiarly the *City of God*, of his designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to his praise, and glorified by his presence. *The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High*. This was the peculiar glory of Jerusalem, that the Lord within her walls had a place where he peculiarly revealed himself, and this is the choice privilege of the saints, concerning which we may cry with wonder, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To be a temple for the Holy Ghost is the delightful portion of each saint, to be the living temple for the Lord our God is also the high honour of the church in her corporate capacity. Our God is here called by a worthy title, indicating his power, majesty, sublimity, and excellency; and it is worthy of note that under this character he dwells in the church. We have not a great God in nature, and a little God in grace; no, the church contains as clear and convincing a revelation of God as the works of nature, and even more amazing in the excellent glory which shines between the cherubim overshadowing that mercy seat which is the centre and gathering place of the people of the living God. To have the Most High dwelling within her members, is to make the church on earth like the church in heaven.

**Verse 5.** *God is in the midst of her.* His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! Let us take heed that we do not grieve him; let us have such respect to him as Moses had when he felt the sand of Horeb's desert to be holy, and put off his shoes from off his feet when the Lord spake from the burning bush. *She shall not be moved.* How can she be moved unless her enemies move her Lord also? His presence renders all hope of capturing and demolishing the city utterly ridiculous. The Lord is in the vessel, and she cannot, therefore, be wrecked. *God shall help her.* Within her he will furnish rich supplies, and outside her walls he will lay her foes in heaps like the armies of Sennacherib, when the angel went forth and smote them. *And that right early.* As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the

coming day, at the turning of the morning God's right arm shall be outstretched for his people. The Lord is up betimes. We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and when rightly viewed, are no delays at all. Today the bands of evil may environ the church of God, and threaten her with destruction; but ere long they shall pass away like the foam on the waters, and the noise of their tumult shall be silent in the grave. The darkest hour of the night is just before the turning of the morning; and then, even then, shall the Lord appear as the great ally of his church.

**Verse 6.** *The heathen raged.* The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea. *The kingdoms were moved.* A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord. *He uttered his voice, the earth melted.* With no other instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word. O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!

**Verse 7.** *The Lord of hosts is with us.* This is the reason for all Zion's security, and for the overthrow of her foes. The Lord rules the angels, the stars, the elements, and all the hosts of heaven; and the heaven of heavens are under his sway. The armies of men though they know it not are made to subserve his will. This Generalissimo of the forces of the land, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas, is on our side—our august ally; woe unto those who fight against him, for they shall fly like smoke before the wind when he gives the word to scatter them. *The God of Jacob is our refuge,* Immanuel is Jehovah of Hosts, and Jacob's God is our high place of defence. When this glad verse is sung to music worthy of such a jubilate, well may the singers pause and the players wait awhile to tune their instruments again; here, therefore, fitly stands that solemn, stately, peaceful note of rest, SELAH.

**Verse 8.** *Come, behold the works of the Lord.* The joyful citizens of Jerusalem are invited to go forth and view the remains of their enemies, that they may mark the prowess of Jehovah and the spoil

which his right hand hath won for his people. It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history it should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel. *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* The destroyers he destroys, the desolators he desolates. How forcible is the verse at this date! The ruined cities of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, are our instructors, and in tables of stone record the doings of the Lord. In every place where his cause and crown have been disregarded ruin has surely followed: sin has been a blight on nations, and left their palaces to lie in heaps. In the days of the writer of this Psalm, there had probably occurred some memorable interpositions of God against his Israel's foes; and as he saw their overthrow, he called on his fellow citizens to come forth and attentively consider the terrible things in righteousness which had been wrought on their behalf. Dismantled castles and ruined abbeys in our own land stand as memorials of the Lord's victories over oppression and superstition. May there soon be more of such desolations.

"Ye gloomy piles, ye tombs of living men,  
Ye sepulchres of womanhood, or worse;  
Ye refuges of lies, soon may ye fall,  
And amid your ruins may the owl, and bat,  
And dragon find congenial resting place."

**Verse 9.** *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.* His voice quiets the tumult of war, and calls for the silence of peace. However remote and barbarous the tribe, he awes the people into rest. He crushes the great powers till they cannot provoke strife again; he gives his people profound repose. *He breaketh the bow,* the sender of swift winged death he renders useless. *And cutteth the spear in sunder*—the lance of the mighty man he shivers. *He burneth the chariot in the fire*—the proud war chariot with its death dealing scythes he commits to the flames. All sorts of weapons he piles heaps on heaps, and utterly destroys them. So was it in Judea in the days of yore, so shall it be in all lands in eras yet to come. Blessed deed of the Prince of Peace! when shall it be literally performed? Already the spiritual foes of his people are despoiled of their power to destroy; but when shall the universal victory of peace be celebrated, and instruments of wholesale murder be consigned to ignominious destruction? How glorious will the ultimate victory of Jesus be in the day of his appearing, when every enemy shall lick the dust!

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know that I am God.* Hold off your hands, ye enemies! Sit down and wait in patience, ye believers! Acknowledge that Jehovah is God, ye who feel the terrors of his wrath! Adore him, and him only, ye who partake in the protection of his grace. Since none can worthily proclaim his nature, let "expressive silence muse his praise." The boasts of the ungodly and the timorous

forebodings of the saints should certainly be hushed by a sight of what the Lord has done in past ages. *I will be exalted among the heathen.* They forget God, they worship idols, but Jehovah will yet be honoured by them. Reader, the prospects of missions are bright, bright as the promises of God. Let no man's heart fail him; the solemn declarations of this verse must be fulfilled. *I will be exalted in the earth,* among all people, whatever may have been their wickedness or their degradation. Either by terror or love God will subdue all hearts to himself. The whole round earth shall yet reflect the light of his majesty. All the more because of the sin, and obstinacy, and pride of man shall God be glorified when grace reigns unto eternal life in all corners of the world.

**Verse 11.** *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* It was meet to sing this twice over. It is a truth of which no believer wearies, it is a fact too often forgotten, it is a precious privilege which cannot be too often considered. Reader, is the Lord on thy side? Is Emmanuel, God with us, thy Redeemer? Is there a covenant between thee and God as between God and Jacob? If so, thrice happy art thou. Show thy joy in holy song, and in times of trouble play the man by still making music for thy God. SELAH. Here as before, lift up the heart. Rest in contemplation after praise. Still keep the soul in tune. It is easier to sing a hymn of praise than to continue in the spirit of praise, but let it be our aim to maintain the uprising devotion of our grateful hearts, and so end our song as if we intended it to be continued.

SELAH bids the music rest.

Pause in silence soft and blest;

SELAH bids uplift the strain,

Harps and voices tune again;

SELAH ends the vocal praise,

Still your hearts to God upraise.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** The LXX referring to the notion of the theme (Mlu), *occultavit*, render it *uper tw n krufiwn, for the hidden*; and the Latin, *pro arcanis*; and the rest of the ancient interpreters take the same course; the Chaldee referring it to *Coreh*, and those that were *hidden, i.e., swallowed up*, by the earth with him, whilst these *sons of Coreh* escaped; as if the mention of the *sons of Coreh* in the title, by whom this song was to be sung, referred the whole Psalm to that story. Accordingly, verse 2, when the Hebrew reads, *"Though the earth be removed,* "the paraphrase is, *"When our fathers were changed from the earth."* Henry Hammond.

**Title.** The title is peculiar, *"Upon Alamo th,* "suggesting *"a choir of virgins,* "as if this virgin choir were selected to sing a Psalm that tells of perils and fears and alarms abounding, in order to show that even the feeble virgins may in that day sing without dread, because of *"The Mighty One"* on their

side. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Title.**—*"Upon Alamo." (To be sung) en soprano. Armand de Mestral, quoted by Perowne.*

**Whole Psalm.** We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin. *Martin Luther.*

**Whole Psalm.** Luther and his companions, with all their bold readiness for danger and death in the cause of truth, had times when their feelings were akin to those of a divine singer, who said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" But in such hours the unflinching Reformer would cheerily say to his friend Melancthon, "Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm; and they could sing it in Luther's own characteristic version":—

A sure stronghold our God is He,  
A timely shield and weapon;  
Our help he will be, and set us free  
From every ill can happen.  
And were the world with devils filled,  
All eager to devour us,  
Our souls to fear shall little yield,  
They cannot overpower us.

—*S. W. Christophers, in "Hymn Writers and their Hymns," 1866*

**Verse 1.** *God is our refuge and strength, etc.* It begins abruptly, but nobly; ye may trust in whom and in what ye please; but GOD (ELOHIM) *is our refuge and strength. A very present help.* A help found to be very powerful and effectual in straits and difficulties. The words are very emphatic: (dam aumn twrub hrze), *ezrah betsaroth nimtsa meod*, "He is found an exceeding, or superlative, help in difficulties." Such we have found him, and therefore celebrate his praise. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 2.** *Though the earth be removed.* John Wesley preached in Hyde park, on the occasion of the earthquake felt in London, March 8, 1750, and repeated these words. Charles Wesley composed Hymn 67, Wesley's Collection, the following lines of which illustrate this verse:

How happy then are we,  
Who build, O Lord, on thee!  
What can our foundation shock?  
Though the shattered earth remove,  
Stands our city on a rock,  
On the rock of heavenly love.

**Verses 2-3.** The earth thrown into a state of wild confusion, the mountains hurled into the mighty

deep, the sea tossed into a tempest, and the everlasting hills drifting on its foaming billows, are the vivid images by which the divine judgments on wicked and persecuting nations are described in the language of the prophets. *John Morison.*

**Verses 2-3, 5.** Palestine was frequently subject to earthquakes, as might have been expected from its physical character and situation; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that although all other parts of the land seem to have been occasionally the scene of those terrible convulsions, the capital was almost wholly free from them. Mount Moriah, or the hill of vision, was so called from its towering height, which made it a conspicuous object in the distance. It stands in the centre of a group of hills, which surround it in the form of an amphitheatre, and it was chiefly to this position, under the special blessing of God, that it stood firm and immovable amid the frequent earthquakes that agitated and ravaged the Holy Land. *Paxton's Illustrations of Scripture.*

**Verse 4.** *There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.* What is the *river* that makes glad the city of God? I answer, God himself is the river, as in the following verse, "*God is in the midst of her.*" 1. God the *Father* is the river: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer 2:13. 2. God the *Son* is the river, the fountain of salvation: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zec 13:1. 3. God the *Spirit* is the river: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Joh 7:38 4:14. What are the *streams* of this river? Answer—the *perfections* of God, the *fulness* of Christ, the *operations* of the Spirit, and these running in the *channel* of the *covenant of promise.* *Ralph Erskine.*

**Verse 4.** *There is a river, etc.* This is that flood which Ezekiel beheld in vision, the waters that came down from the right side of the house, and rising first to the ankles—then as the prophet passed onward, to the knees—then to the loins—became afterwards a river that he could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Shall we see in this, with the angelic doctor, the river of grace which burst forth from Mount Calvary? streams branching off hither and thither, the *pelagim* of the Hebrew—"to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Job 38:1-41. O "fountain of gardens, "well of living waters, " "streams from Lebanon, "how do you, the "nether springs" of this world, bring to us something of the everlasting loveliness and peace of those "upper springs, "by which the beautiful flock now feed and lie down, none making them afraid! Or with S. Ambrose and S. Bernard, understand the verse of the "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." And then the rivers of that flood shall indeed *make glad the city of God,* the house

not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where is the tree of life, that beareth twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month; that country and that river of which the old liturgies say, "They who rest in the bosom of Abraham are in the tabernacle of joy and rest, in the dwellings of light, in the world of pleasure, in the church of the true Jerusalem, where there is no place for affliction, nor way of sadness, where there are no wars with the flesh, and no resistance to temptation, where sin is forgotten, and past danger is only remembered as a present pleasure." *Thomas Aquinas, Ambrose, and Bernard, in Neale's Commentary.*

**Verse 4.** *There is a river.* The river of God that flows from his throne. No enemy can cut off this stream from the church of Christ. Observe the reference to Isa 36:2 37:25, compared with 2Ch 32:2-4. These gently flowing, but full streams, are contrasted with the roaring waves of the sea. *T. C. Barth.*

**Verse 4.** *There is a river, etc.* The allusion is either to the river Kidron, which ran by Jerusalem, or to the waters of Shiloah, which by different courses and branches ran through the city of Jerusalem, and supplied the several parts of it with water, to the joy and comfort of its inhabitants. But the words are to be understood in a figurative sense, as applicable to gospel times; and this river either designs the gospel, the streams of which are its doctrines, which are living waters, that went out from Jerusalem, and which publish glad tidings of great joy to all sensible sinners; or the Spirit and his graces, which are compared to a well and rivers of living water, in the exercises of which the saints have much joy and peace; or else the Lord himself, who is the place of broad rivers and streams to his people, and is both their refreshment and protection; or rather his everlasting love to them is here intended. *John Gill.*

**Verse 4.** Compared with the waterless deserts around, Judaea and Jerusalem were well watered, and drought pressed more severely on the besiegers than the besieged. The allusion here is to the well known rill and pool of Siloam. So in Isa 8:6, the blessing of God's protection is represented by the waters of Shiloah, which go softly. *From "The psalms Chronologically arranged. By Four Friends," 1867.*

**Verse 4.** *The city.* The church of God is like a city, 1. Because a city is a place of *security*. 2. A place of *society*: what one wants another supplies; they have mutual fellowship. 3. A place of *unity*, that people may therein live in peace and concord. 4. A place of *trade* and *traffic*. Here is the market of free grace: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, "etc. Here is the *pearl of great price* exposed for sale. 5. A place of *freedom* and *liberty*, freedom from the guilt of sin, wrath of God, curse of the law, present evil world, bondage to Satan, etc., etc. 6. A place of *order* and *regularity*; it hath its constitutions and ordinances. 7. A place of *rest*, and commodious to live in, and thus it is opposed to the wilderness. 8. A place of *privileges*. 9. A place of *pomp* and *splendour*; there is the king, the court, the throne. 10. A place of *pleasure* and *beauty*; Ps 48:2.—Ralph Erskine.

**Verse 5.** *God is in the midst of her.* It is the real presence of Christ, and the supernatural power of his Spirit, which makes the church mighty to the conquest of souls. The church spreads because her *God is in the midst of her.* When at any time she has forgotten her dependence on the invisible intercession of her Head, and the gracious energy of his Spirit, she has found herself shorn of the locks of her great strength, and has become the laughing stock of the Philistines. *William Binnie, D.D.*

**Verse 5.** *God is in the midst of her,* etc. The enemies of the church may toss her as waves, but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a *feather*, but shall not sink therein as *lead*. He that is a well of water within her to keep her from fainting, will also prove a wall of fire about her to preserve her from falling. *Tried* she may be, but *destroyed* she cannot be. Her foundation is the Rock of Ages, and her defence the everlasting Arms. It is only such fabrics as are bottomed upon the *sand*, that are overthrown by the *wind*. The adversaries of God's people will push at them as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution, as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such wisps into the fire. *William Secker.*

**Verse 5.** When the Papists were in their ruff, and Melancthon began sometimes to fear lest the infant Reformation should be stifled in the birth, Luther was wont to comfort him with these words: "*Si nos ruemus, ruet Christus und, scilicet ille regnator mundi, esto ruat, malo ego cum Christo rures, quam cum Caesare stare;*" that is, If we perish, Christ must fall too (he is in the midst of us), and if it must be so, be it so; I had rather perish with Christ, that great Ruler of the world, than prosper with Caesar. *John Collings.*

**Verse 5.** *And that right early.* Therefore, notice that all the great deliverances wrought in Holy Scripture, were wrought so *early*, as to have been brought to pass in the middle of the night. So Gideon, with his pitchers and lamps against the Midianites; so Saul, when he went forth against Nahash, the Ammonite; so Joshua, when he went up to succour Gibeon; so Samson, when he carried off in triumph the gates of Gaza; so also the associate kings, under the guidance of Elisha, in their expedition against the Moabites, when they, according to God's command, filled the wilderness with ditches, and then beheld their enemies drawn to their destruction, by the reflection of the rising sun upon the water. *Michael Ayguan.*

**Verse 5.** *Right early.* Rather, with the margin, *when the morning appeareth.* The restoration of the Jews will be one of the first things at the season of the second advent. It will be accomplished in the very dawning of that day, "when the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing on his wings." *Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 7.** *The Lord of hosts is with us.* There be three sorts of God's special presence, all which may be justly accounted the church's privilege. First, his *glorious* presence, or his presence testified by eminent glory, and the residence thereof. Thus God is said to be in heaven differentially, so as he is not anywhere else; and heaven is therefore called his throne or dwelling place 1Ki 8:39; as a king is

nowhere so majestically as upon his throne, or in his chair of state; and this is so great a privilege of the church as that she comes not to enjoy it, unless she be triumphant in heaven, and therefore is not the presence here intended. Secondly, his *gracious* presence, or his presence testified by tokens of his grace and favour toward a people, whether visible as in the temple where he chose to place his name, and wherein above all places he would be worshipped, in which respect he is said to dwell between the cherubim 2Sa 6:2; or spiritual tokens of his grace, as assistance and acceptance in the duties of his worship, together with enjoyment and benefit of his ordinances. Thus he is present with his church and people in times of the gospel: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Mt 18:20. This kind of presence is a privilege of the church militant, that he will be with her in holy and spiritual administrations and ordinances; yet this is not the presence principally intended here. Thirdly, the *providential* presence, or his presence testified by acts of special providence, wherein the power, wisdom or any other of God's attributes are eminently put forth, either by way of assistance or defence fro a people. Thus the Lord was present with Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of fore and of a cloud Ex 13:21; "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." And as this presence was intended for a guide, so was it also for a defence to his people against their enemies, and at which their enemies the Egyptians were troubled. Ex 15:20. By this kind of presence the Lord is with his church militant, in reference to her external regiment, and more especially in her warfare, standing up for her and with her against her enemies; and this is the church's privilege in these words, *The Lord of hosts is with us.* John Strickland, B.D. (1601-1670), in a Sermon, entitled, "Immanuel," 1644.

**Verse 7.** *The God of Jacob.* If any shall ask me, Why then the God of Jacob more than the God of Isaac? Though it might suffice that the Spirit of God is pleased so to speak, yet Mr. Calvin gives this reason, the covenant of grace was more solemnly made and publicly ratified with Abraham and Jacob, than it was with Isaac, and therefore when he will be looked upon as a God in covenant with his people, he holds forth himself more frequently by the name of the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob, than of the God of Isaac; albeit sometimes he is pleased to take upon him that style also. John Strickland.

**Verse 7.** *Our refuge.* Our refuge, or stronghold, where the church, as a ship in quiet haven, may anchor and ride safe; or it may be a metaphor from the dens or burrows, where weaponless creatures find shelter, when they are hunted and pursued by their enemies, as Pr 30:26, "*The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.*" They are safe in the rock if they can get thither, though never so weak in themselves. So the church, though pursued by bloody enemies, and though weak in herself, if yet she get under the wing of the God of Jacob, she may be fearless, for she is safe there. *He is our refuge.* It were to undervalue God, if we should fear the creatures,

when he is with us. Antigonus, when he overheard his soldiers reckoning how many their enemies were, he steps in unto them suddenly, demanding, "And how many do you reckon me for?" *John Strickland.*

**Verse 8.** *Come, behold the works of the Lord. Venite, videte.* God looks that his works should be well observed, and especially when he hath wrought any great deliverance for his people. Of all things, he cannot abide to be forgotten. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 8.** *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* We are here first invited to a tragical sight. We are carried into the *camera di morte*, to see the ghastly visage of deaths and desolations all the world over; than which nothing can be more horrible and dreadful. You are called out to see piles of dead carcasses; to see whole basketfuls of heads, as was presented to Jehu: a woeful spectacle, but a necessary one. See, therefore, *what desolation the Lord hath wrought in all the earth.* Desolations by wars: how many fields have been drenched with blood, and composted with carcasses; how many millions of men have been cut off in all ages by the edge of the sword! Desolations by famine; wherein men have been forced to make their bodies one another's sepulchres, and mothers to devour their children of a span long. Desolations by plagues and pestilence; which have swept away, as our story tells us, eight hundred thousand in one city. Desolations by inundations of waters; which have covered the faces of many regions, and rinsed the earth of her unclean inhabitants. Desolations by earthquakes, which have swallowed up whole cities; and those great and populous. Desolations wrought by the hand of his angels; as in Egypt; in the tents of the Assyrians, one hundred and eighty five thousand in one night; in the camp of Israel, in David's pestilence. Desolations wrought by the hand of men, in battles and massacres. Desolations by wild beasts; as in the colonies of Ashur planted in Samaria. Desolations by the swarms of obnoxious and noisome creatures; as in Egypt, and since in Africa: "He spoke the word, and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable," Ps 105:34. In so much as, in the consulship of M. Fulvius Flaccus, after the bloody wars of Africa, followed infinite numbers of locusts; which, after devouring of all herbs and fruit, were, by a sudden wind, hoised into the African sea: infection followed upon their putrefaction, and thereupon a general mortality: in number, four score thousand died: upon the sea coast betwixt Carthage and Utica, above two hundred thousand. Desolations every way, and by what variety of means soever; yet all wrought by the divine hand; *What desolations he hath wrought.* Whoever be the instrument, he is the Author. *Joseph Hall (Bishop.)*

**Verse 8.** Doth not God make great desolations, when he makes that man that counted himself a most religious man, to confess himself not sufficient for one good thought? As it was with Paul, does he not make wars to cease when he turns the heart of a persecutor, earnestly to seek peace with God and man, yea, with his very enemies? Doth he not break the bow and all weapons of war asunder, and that in all the earth, when he proclaims peace to all that are far off and near, professor

and profane, Jews and Gentiles? *Richard Coore.*

**Verses 8-10.** Come, behold the works of the Lord. What works? ruining works. *What desolations he hath made in the earth.* God made strange work in the world at that time. Those countries which before were as the garden of God, became like a desolate wilderness: who was able to bear this with patience? Yet the Spirit of God saith in the next words, it must be patiently borne. When God lets men strive and war with one another to a common confusion, yet no man may strive with God about it: and the reason given why no man may, is only this (which is indeed all the reason in the world), *He is God.* So it follows in the Psalm; *Be still, and know that I am God;* as if the Lord had said, Not a word, do not strive nor reply; whatever you see, hold your peace; know that I, being God, give no account of any of my matters. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verses 8-10.** Come, behold the works of the Lord.

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know that I am God.* The great works of God, wherein his sovereignty appeared, had been described in the foregoing verses. In the awful desolations that he made, and by delivering his people by terrible things, he showed his greatness and dominion. Herein he manifested his power and sovereignty, and so commands all *to be still, and know that he is God.* For says he, *I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.* In the words may be observed, 1. A duty described, to be still before God, and under the dispensations of his providence; which implies that we must be still as to *words*; not speaking against the sovereign dispensations of Providence, or complaining of them; not darkening counsel by words without knowledge, or justifying ourselves and speaking great swelling words of vanity. We must be still as to *actions* and outward behaviour, so as not to oppose God in his dispensations; and as *to the inward frame of our hearts*, cultivating a calm and quiet submission of soul to the sovereign pleasure of God, whatever it may be. 2. We may observe the ground of this duty, namely, *the divinity of God.* His being God is a sufficient reason why we should be *still* before him, in no wise murmuring, or objecting, or opposing, but calmly and humbly submitting to him. 3. How we must fulfil this duty of being still before God, namely, with a sense of his divinity, as seeing the ground of this duty, in that we *know* him to be God. Our submission is to be such as becomes rational creatures. God doth not require us to submit contrary to reason, but to submit as seeing the reason and ground of submission. Hence, the bare consideration *that God is God* may well be sufficient to still all objections and oppositions against the divine sovereign dispensations. *Jonathan Edwards.*

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know that I am God.* This text of Scripture forbids quarrelling and murmuring against God. Now let me apply as I go along. There are very few, and these very well circumstanced, that find themselves in no hazard of quarrelling with God. I think almost that if angels were on earth, they would be in hazard of it. I will assure you, there are none that have corruption, but they have need to be afraid of this. But many give way to this quarrelling, and consider not the hazard thereof.

Beware of it, for it is a dreadful thing to quarrel with God: who may say unto him, "What doest thou?" It is a good account of Aaron, that when God made fire to destroy his sons, he held his peace. Let us then, while we bear the yoke, "sit alone and keep silence, and put our mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope." La 3:28-29. Ye know, the murmuring of the children of Israel cost them very dear. *Be still*, that is, beware of murmuring against me, saith the Lord. God gives not an account of his matters to any; because there may be many things ye cannot see through; and therefore ye may think it better to have wanted them, and much more, for the credit of God and the church. I say, God gives not an account of his matters to any. Beware, then, of drawing rash conclusions. *Richard Cameron's Sermon, preached July 18th, 1680, three days before he was killed at Airsmoss.*

**Verse 10.** *Be still and know that I am God.* Faith gives the soul a view of the Great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quenches the temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great; therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God, under this notion, is propounded: *Be still, and know that I am God*; as if he had said, Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion; and again, know, ye trembling souls, that I am God; and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins, and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know that I am the Lord.* Not everyone is a fit scholar for God's school, but such as are purified according to the purification of the sanctuary. Carnal men are drowned in fleshly and worldly cares, and neither purged nor lifted up to receive the light of God, or else indisposed by prejudice or passion, that they cannot learn at all. We will never savingly know him, till our souls be free of these indispositions. Among all the elements the earth is fitted to receive seed of the sower; if he cast it into the fire, it burneth; if in the air, it withereth; if in the waters, it rots, the instability of that body is for producing monsters, because it closes not straitly the seeds of fishes. Spirits of a fiery temper, or light in inconstancy, or moving as waters, are not for God's lessons, but such as in *stayed humility* do rest under his hand. If waters be mixed with clay in their substance, or their surface be troubled with wind, they can neither receive nor render any image; such unstable spirits in the school of God lose their time and endanger themselves. *William Struther.*

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know, etc.* As you must come and see Ps 46:8, so come and *hear* what the Lord saith to those enemies of yours. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 11.** *The Lord of hosts is with us.* On Tuesday Mr. Wesley could with difficulty be understood, though he often attempted to speak. At last, with all the strength he had, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." Again, raising his hand, and waving it in triumph, he exclaimed with thrilling effect, "The best of all is, God is with us." These words seem to express the leading feature of his whole life,

God had been with him from early childhood; his providence had guided him through all the devious wanderings of human life; and now, when he was entering the "valley of the shadow of death," the same hand sustained him. *From "Wesley and his Coadjutors. By Rev. W. C. Larrabee, A.M. Edited by Rev. B. F. Tefft, D.D. Cincinnati. 1851."*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** The song of faith in troublous times.

1. *Our refuge.* Our only, impregnable, accessible, delightful place of retreat is our God.
2. *Our strength.* Our all sufficient, unconquerable, honourable, and emboldening strength is our God.
3. *Our help.* Ever near, sympathising, faithful, real, and potent is our God.

**Verse 1.** *A very present help in trouble.* Religion never so valuable as in seasons of trouble, sickness, and death. God is present helping us to bear trouble, to improve it, and to survive it. Present by gracious communications and sweet manifestations; present most when he seems absent, restraining, overruling, and sanctifying trouble. Trust and wait. *James Smith.*

**Verse 2.** The reasons, advantages, and glory of holy courage.

**Verses 2-3.**

1. The great and many causes for fear.
  - (a) What might come—mountains, waters, etc., persecution, pestilence, etc.
  - (b) What must come—afflictions, death, judgment.
2. The great and one cause for not fearing. Fearlessness under such circumstances should be well grounded. God himself is our refuge, and we confiding in him are fearless. *G. Rogers.*

**Verse 4.** Glad tidings in sad times; or, the city of God in the times of trouble and confusion, watered with the river of consolation. *Ralph Erskine.*

**Verse 4.** What can this *river* be but that blessed covenant to which David himself repaired in the time of trouble? ...And what are *the streams* of this river, but the outgoings and effects of this divine constitution?

1. The blood of Jesus.
2. The influences of the Holy Spirit.
3. The doctrines and promises of the gospel.
4. The ordinances of religion.
5. All the means of grace. *W. Jay.*

**Verse 4.** *Make glad the city of God.* There are four ways in which the streams of a river would gladden the citizens.

1. The first regards *prospect.*
2. The second regards *traffic.*

3. The third regards *fertility*.

4. The fourth regards *supply*. *W. Jay*.

**Verse 4.** *City of God*. The church may be called "the city of God" because, 1. He dwells in it (see Ps 44:5). 2. He *founded* it and *built* it. 3. It derives all *privileges* and *immunities* from him. 4. He is the chief Ruler or Governor there. 5. It is his property. 6. He draws the *rent* of it. *Ralph Erskine*.

**Verses 4-5.** To the church, Joy, Establishment, Deliverance.

**Verse 6.** What man did and what God did.

**Verse 8.** *Behold the works of the Lord*.

1. They are worth beholding, for they are like himself; well becoming his infinite power, wisdom, justice,

2. Our eyes were given us for this very purpose—not for the beholding of vanity, not for the ensnaring or wounding of the soul; but for the use and honour of the Creator.

3. The Lord delights to have his works beheld; he knows their excellency and perfection, and that the more they are seen and noted the more honour will accrue to the Maker of them.

4. None but we can do it; there is great reason then that we should carefully *behold*, etc.

5. This shall be of great benefit to ourselves. *Bishop Hall*.

**Verse 8.** The desolations of the Lord, the consolation of his saints.

1. A declaration of what has happened.

2. A promise of what shall be achieved. *Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 190*.

**Verse 9.** The Great Peacemaker, or the principle of the gospel our only hope, for the total abolition of war.

**Verse 10.** *Be still, and know that I am God*. The sole consideration that God is God, sufficient to still all objections to his sovereignty. *Jonathan Edwards*.

**Verse 10.** *I am God*. 1. In that he is God, he is an absolutely and infinitely *perfect* being. 2. As he is God, he is so *great*, that he is infinitely above all comprehension. 3. As he is God, all things are his *own*. 4. In that he is God, he is *worthy* to be sovereign over all things. 5. In that he is God, he *will* be sovereign, and *will* act as such. 6. In that he is God, he is able to *avenge* himself on those who oppose his sovereignty. *Jonathan Edwards*.

## **Psalm 47**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician. Many songs were dedicated to this leader of the chorus, but he was not overloaded thereby. God's service is such delight that it cannot weary us; and that choicest part of it, the singing of his praises, is so pleasurable that we cannot have too much of it. Doubtless, the chief musician, as he was commissioned with so many sacred songs, felt that the more the merrier. A Psalm for the Sons of Korah. We cannot agree with those who think that the sons of Korah were the authors of these Psalms; they have all the indications of David's authorship that one could expect to see. Our ear has grown accustomed to the ring of David's compositions, and we are morally certain that we hear it in this Psalm. Every expert would detect here the autography of the Son of Jesse, or we are greatly mistaken. The Sons of Korah sang these Psalms, but we believe they did not write them. Fit singers were they whose origin reminded them of sin, whose existence was a proof of sovereign grace, and whose name has a close connection with the name of Calvary.

**SUBJECT.** Whether the immediate subject of this Psalm be the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obededom to Mount Zion, or the celebration of some memorable victory, it would be hard to decide. As even the doctors differ, who should dogmatise? But it is very clear that both the present sovereignty of Jehovah, and the final victories of our Lord, are here fitly hymned, while his ascension, as the prophecy of them, is sweetly gloried in.

**DIVISION.** In so short a Psalm, there is no need of any other division than that indicated by the musical pause at the end of Ps 47:4.

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## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *O clap your hands.* The most natural and most enthusiastic tokens of exultation are to be used in view of the victories of the Lord, and his universal reign. Our joy in God may be demonstrative, and yet he will not censure it. *All ye people.* The joy is to extend to all nations; Israel may lead the van, but all the Gentiles are to follow in the march of triumph, for they have an equal share in that kingdom where there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. Even now if they did but know it, it is the best hope of all nations that Jehovah ruleth over them. If they cannot all speak the same tongue, the symbolic language of the hands they can all use. All people will be ruled by the Lord in the latter days, and all will exult in that rule; were they wise they would submit to it now, and rejoice to do so; yea, they would clap their hands in rapture at the thought. *Shout,* let your voices keep tune with your hands. *Unto God,* let him have all the honours of the day, and let them be loud, joyous, universal, and undivided. *With the voice of triumph,* with happy sounds, consonant with such splendid victories, so great a King, so excellent a rule, and such happy subjects. Many are human languages, and yet the nations may triumph as with one voice. Faith's view of God's government is full of transport. The prospect of the universal reign of the Prince of Peace is enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing; what will the reality be? Well might the poet of the seasons bid mountains

and valleys raise their joyous hymn—  
"For the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,  
And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come."

**Verse 2.** *For the Lord*, or JEHOVAH, the self-existent and only God; *Most high*, most great in power, lofty in dominion, eminent in wisdom, elevated in glory. *Is terrible*, none can resist his power or stand before his vengeance; yet as these terrors are wielded on the behalf of his subjects, they are fit reasons for rejoicing. Omnipotence, which is terrible to crush, is almighty to protect. At a grand review of the troops of a great prince, all his loyal subjects are filled with triumph, because their liege lord is so able to defend his own, and so much dreaded by his foes. *He is a great King over all the earth*. Not over Judea only, but even to the utmost isles his reign extends. Our God is no local deity, no petty ruler of a tribe; in infinite majesty he rules the mightiest realm as absolute arbiter of destiny, sole monarch of all lands, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Not a hamlet or an islet is excluded from his dominion. How glorious will that era be when this is seen and known of all; when in the person of Jesus all flesh shall behold the glory of the Lord!

**Verse 3.** *He*, with whom is infinite power, *shall subdue the people under us*. The battle is not ours but the Lord's. He will take his own time, but he will certainly achieve victory for his church. Truth and righteousness shall through grace climb to the ascendant. We wage no doubtful warfare. Hearts the most rebellious, and wills the most stubborn, shall submit to all conquering grace. All the Lord's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, may clap their hands at this, for God's victory will be theirs; but surely apostles, prophets, ministers, and those who suffer and labour the most, may take the largest share in the joy. Idolatry, infidelity, superstition, we shall yet tread upon, as men tread down the stones of the street. *And the nations under our feet*. The church of God shall be the greatest of monarchies, her victory shall be signal and decisive. Christ shall take to himself his great power and reign, and all the tribes of men shall own at once his glory and the glory of his people in him. How changed will be the position of affairs in coming ages! The people of God have been under the feet of men in long and cruel persecutions, and in daily contempt; but God will reverse the position, and the best in character shall be first in honour.

**Verse 4.** While as yet we see not all things put under him, we are glad to put ourselves and our fortunes at his disposal. *He shall choose our inheritance for us*. We feel his reign to be so gracious that we even now ask to be in the fullest degree the subjects of it. We submit our will, our choice, our desire, wholly to him. Our heritage here and hereafter we leave to him, let him do with us as seemeth him good. *The excellency of Jacob whom he loved*. He gave his ancient people their portion, he will give us ours, and we ask nothing better; this is the most spiritual and real manner of clapping our hands because of his sovereignty, namely, to leave all our affairs in his hands, for then our hands are empty of all care for self, and free to be used in his honour. He was the boast and glory of Israel, he is

and shall be ours. He loved his people and became their greatest glory; he loves us, and he shall be our exceeding joy. As for the latter days, we ask nothing better than to stand in our appointed lot, for if we have but a portion in our Lord Jesus, it is enough for our largest desires. Our beauty, our boast, our best treasure, lies in having such a God to trust in, such a God to love us. *Selah*. Yes, pause, ye faithful songsters. Here is abundant room for holy meditation—

"Muse awhile, obedient thought,  
Lo, the theme's with rapture fraught;  
See thy King, whose realm extends  
Even to earth's remotest ends.  
Gladly shall the nations own  
Him their God and Lord alone;  
Clap their hands with holy mirth,  
Hail him MONARCH OF THE EARTH.  
Come, my soul, before him bow,  
Gladdest of his subjects thou;  
Leave thy portion to his choice,  
In his sovereign will rejoice,  
This thy purest, deepest bliss,  
He is thine and thou art his."

**Verse 5.** *God is gone up with a shout.* Faith hears the people already shouting. The command of the first verse is here regarded as a fact. The fight is over, the conqueror ascends to his triumphant chariot, and rides up to the gates of the city which is made resplendent with the joy of his return. The words are fully applicable to the ascension of the Redeemer. We doubt not that angels and glorified spirits welcomed him with acclamations. He came not without song, shall we imagine that he returned in silence? *The Lord with the sound of a trumpet.* Jesus is Jehovah. The joyful strain of the trumpet betokens the splendour of his triumph. It was meet to welcome one returning from the wars with martial music. Fresh from Bozrah, with his garments all red from the winepress, he ascended, leading captivity captive, and well might the clarion ring out the tidings of Immanuel's victorious return.

**Verse 6.** *Sing praises.* What jubilation is here, when five times over the whole earth is called upon to sing *to God!* He is worthy, he is Creator, he is goodness itself. *Sing praises,* keep on with the glad work. Never let the music pause. He never ceases to be good, let us never cease to be grateful. Strange that we should need so much urging to attend to so heavenly an exercise. *Sing praises unto our King.* Let him have all our praise; no one ought to have even a particle of it. Jesus shall have it all. Let his sovereignty be the fount of gladness. It is a sublime attribute, but full of bliss to the faithful. Let

our homage be paid not in groans but songs. He asks not slaves to grace his throne; he is no despot; singing is fit homage for a monarch so blessed and gracious. Let all hearts that own his sceptre sing and sing on for ever, for there is everlasting reason for thanksgiving while we dwell under the shadow of such a throne.

**Verse 7.** *For God is the King of all the earth.* The Jews of our Saviour's time resented this truth, but had their hearts been right they would have rejoiced in it. They would have kept their God to themselves, and not even have allowed the Gentile dogs to eat the crumbs from under his table. Alas! how selfishness turns honey into wormwood. Jehovah is not the God of the Jews only, all the nations of the earth are, through the Messiah, yet to own him Lord. Meanwhile his providential throne governs all events beneath the sky. *Sing praises with understanding.* Sing a didactic Psalm. Sound doctrine praises God. Even under the economy of types and ceremonies, it is clear that the Lord had regard to the spirituality of worship, and would be praised thoughtfully, intelligently, and with deep appreciation of the reason for song. It is to be feared from the slovenly way in which some make a noise in singing, that they fancy any sound will do. On the other hand, from the great attention paid by some to the mere music, we feel sadly sure that the sense has no effect upon them. Is it not a sin to be tickling men's ears with sounds when we profess to be adoring the Lord? What has a sensuous delight in organs, anthems, etc., to do with devotion? Do not men mistake physical effects for spiritual impulses? Do they not often offer to God strains far more calculated for human amusement than for divine acceptance? An understanding enlightened of the Holy Spirit is then and then only fully capable of offering worthy praise.

**Verse 8.** Now at this moment, over the most debased idolaters, God holds a secret rule; here is work for faith. How we ought to long for the day when this truth shall be changed in its aspect, and the rule now unrecognised shall be delighted in! The great truth that *God reigneth* in providence is the guarantee that in a gracious gospel sense his promises shall be fulfilled, and his kingdom shall come. *He sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.* Unmoved he occupies an undisputed throne, whose decrees, acts, and commands are holiness itself. What other throne is like this? Never was it stained with injustice, or defiled with sin. Neither is he who sits upon it dismayed, or in a dilemma. He sits in serenity, for he knows his own power, and sees that his purposes will not miscarry. Here is reason enough for holy song.

**Verse 9.** *The princes of the people are gathered together.* The prophetic eye of the psalmist sees the willing subjects of the great King assembled to celebrate his glory. Not only the poor and the men of low estate are there, but nobles bow their willing necks to his sway. "All kings shall bow down before him." No people shall be unrepresented; their great men shall be good men, their royal ones regenerate ones. How august will be the parliament where the Lord Jesus shall open the court, and princes shall rise up to do him honour! *Even the people of the God of Abraham.* That same God, who

was known only to here and there a patriarch like the father of the faithful, shall be adored by a seed as many as the stars of heaven. The covenant promise shall be fulfilled, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Shiloh shall come, and "to him shall the gathering of the people be." Babel's dispersion shall be obliterated by the gathering arm of the Great Shepherd King. For the shields of the earth belong unto God. The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war, all must pay loyal homage to the King of all. Right honourables must honour Jesus, and majesties must own him to be far more majestic. Those who are earth's protectors, the shields of the commonwealth, derive their might from him, and are his. All principalities and powers must be subject unto Jehovah and his Christ, for *He is greatly exalted*. In nature, in power, in character, in glory, there is none to compare with him. Oh, glorious vision of a coming era! Make haste, ye wheels of time! Meanwhile, ye saints, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** Some have applied this Psalm to Christ's ascension; but it speaks of his Second Coming. The Mighty One is seated peacefully on his throne. We are referred back to Ps 45:1-17. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 1.** *O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.* This should be done, 1. Cheerfully, *Clap your hands*, for this is a sign of inward joy, Na 3:19. 2. Universally: "O clap you hands, *all ye people*." 3. Vocally: *Shout unto God with the voice of triumph*. 4. Frequently: "*Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises*", Ps 47:6; and again "*sing praises*", Ps 47:7. It cannot be done too frequently. 5. Knowingly and discreetly: "Sing ye praises *with understanding*"; "know the reason why ye are to praise him. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 1.** *O clap your hands*, etc. Such expressions of pious and devout affection as to some may seem indecent and imprudent, yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed; because if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 1.** *O clap your hands.* The *voice of melody* is not so much to be uttered with the tongue, as with the hands; that it, it is our deeds not our words, by which God is here to be praised. Even as it was in him whose pattern we are to follow: "Jesus began both to do and to teach." *J. M. Neale.*

**Verse 1.** *All ye people.* *Peoples*, in the plural. Here it is used to call both Jews and Gentiles—all nations. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 1.** *Shout unto God. Jubilate Deo: in God, and concerning God, and in honour of God.* He does not excite them to carnal joy. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 2.** *For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth.* The church celebrates

the ascension of Christ, because then he was "highly exalted; "then he became *terrible* to his enemies, all power in heaven and earth being committed to him; and then he began to display the excellent majesty of his universal kingdom, to which he was then inaugurated, being crowned "King of kings, and Lord of lords." *George Horne.*

**Verse 2.** *The Lord most high is terrible.* Christ is *terrible*, that is, fearful, or meet to be feared, not of his children only for their good, but of the wicked also for their punishment; *terrible* to the devil, as being stronger than he, casting out the prince of darkness by the finger of God. Lu 11:22 Joh 12:31. And therefore so soon as an unclean spirit saw Jesus, he cried out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?" Mr 1:24; or as other devils, Mt 8:29, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" for the devils in believing tremble. *Terrible* to hypocrites, and other impious agents of the devil, as having his fan in his hand to make clean his floor, and to gather his wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Mt 3:12. Or Christ is *excelsus in potentia, terribilis in justitia*; high in power, and fearful in justice; high in exalting the good, and terrible in humbling the bad. *John Boys.*

**Verse 3.** *He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.* The consequence of our Lord's ascension was the going forth of the all subduing Word, under the influence and direction of which, the convinced and converted nations renounced their idols and their lusts, and bowed their willing necks to the yoke of Jesus. This is that great conquest, fore showed by the victories of Joshua, David, and all the faithful heroes of old time, and foretold in language borrowed from their history. *George Horne.*

**Verse 3.** *He shall subdue the people under us, etc., or he shall lead like sheep; or bring unto to fold;* as divers render the word, by comparing Isa 5:17 Mic 2:12. He seems to speak of such a subjugation of them, as was for the good of the people subdued, because this is matter of rejoicing to them, verse 1; which is true both of these people whom David subdued, who thereby had opportunities, obligations, and encouragements to own and worship the true God, which was the only way to their true and lasting happiness; and especially of those Gentiles who were subdued to Christ by the preaching of the gospel. The Gentile converts were in some sort brought under the Jews, because they were subjected to Christ and to his apostles, and to the primitive church, which were Jews. *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 3.** *And the nations under our feet.* By this manner of speech is meant, that the Gentiles should be *scholars*, and the Jews *schoolmasters*, as it were to them; for *to sit under the feet*, or *at the feet*, is used in Scripture for being a scholar, or learning, as Ac 22:3. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall choose.* Futures are variously rendered; and accordingly the vulgar Latin, Syriac, and Arabic, render this word, *He hath chosen.* *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall choose our inheritance for us.* It is reported of a woman who, being sick, was asked

whether she was willing to live or die; she answered, "Which God pleases." But, said one, if God should refer it to you, which would you choose? "Truly," replied she, "I would refer it to him again." Thus that man obtains his will of God, whose will is subjected to God. We are not to be troubled that we have no more *from* God, but we are to be troubled that we do no more *for* God. Christians, if the Lord be well pleased with your persons, should not you be well pleased with your conditions? There is more reason that you should be pleased with them, than that he should be pleased with you. Believers should be like sheep, which change their pastures at the will of the shepherd; or like vessels in a house, which stand to be filled or emptied at the pleasure of their owner. He that sails upon the sea of this world in his own bottom, will sink at last into a bottomless ocean. Never were any their own carvers, but they were sure to cut their own fingers. *William Secker.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall choose our inheritance for us*, means that he who knows what is better for us than ourselves, *hath chosen*, that is, hath appointed, and that of his own good will and mercy towards us, *our inheritance*; not only things meet for this life, as lands, and houses, and possessions, etc., but even all other things concerning the hope of a better life, to wit, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, an everlasting habitation, and inheritance which is immortal and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven. *John Boys.*

**Verse 4.** *The excellency (or glory) of Jacob, whom he loved*; that is, even all those excellent things that he gave and promised to Jacob, wherein he might glory and rejoice. The faithful mean, that they had as great, both abundance and assurance of God's grace and goodness, as ever Jacob had. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**Verse 4.** It may be thou art godly and poor. It is well; but canst thou tell whether, if thou wert not poor, thou wouldst be godly? Surely God knows us better than we ourselves do, and therefore can best fit the estate to the person. *Giles Fletcher.*

**Verse 5.** *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.* It is worthy (as Origen suggests) that this mention of the *shout*, and the *voice* of the *trumpet*, serves to connect together past and future events in the history of the church and of the world, and carry our thoughts forward to Christ's coming to judgment. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 5.** Thou hast great cause, O my soul, to praise him, and to rejoice before him, especially if thou considerest that Christ ascended not for himself, but also for thee: it is God in our nature that is gone up to heaven: whatever God acted on the person of Christ, that he did as in thy behalf, and he means to act the very same on thee. Christ as a public person ascended up to heaven; thy interest is in this very ascension of Jesus Christ; and therefore dost thou consider thy Head as soaring up? O let every member praise his name; let thy tongue (called thy *glory*), glory in this, and trumpet out his praise, that in respect of thy duty it may be verified: "Christ is *gone up with a shout, the Lord with a sound of a trumpet.*" *Isaac Ambrose.*

**Verse 7.** *For God is the King of all the earth:* as if he had said, "our King, said I? it is too little; he is King of all the earth." John Trapp.

**Verse 7.** *Sing ye praises with understanding.* How may we make melody in our hearts to God in singing of Psalms? We must sing *with understanding*. We must not be guided by the *time*, but the *words* of the Psalm; we must mind the matter more than the music, and consider what we sing, as well as how we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, but it is the matter affects the heart, and that God principally eyes. The psalmist advises us in this particular, and so doth the apostle 1Co 14:15. Otherwise this sweet duty would be more the work of a chorister than of a Christian, and we should be more delighted in an anthem of the musician's making, than in a Psalm of the Spirit's making. A. Lapede observes that in the text, 1Co 14:15, the word *understanding* is *maschil*, (lyksm), profound judgment: we must sing *wisely*, if we will sing gratefully; we must relish what we sing. In a word, we must sing as we must pray; now the most rude petitioner will *understand* what he prays. 1Co 14:15. If we do not understand what we sing, it argues carelessness of spirit, or hardness of heart; and this makes the service impertinent. Upon this the worthy Davenant cries out, "Adieu to the bellowing of the Papists, who sing in an unknown tongue." God will not understand us in that service which we understand not ourselves. One of the first pieces of the creation was *light*, and this must break out in every duty. John Wells(—1676), in "*Morning Exercises*."

**Verse 7.** *Sing ye praises with understanding, sing an instructive song.* Let *sense* and *sound* go together. Let your *hearts* and *heads* go with your *voices*. *Understand* what you *sing*, and *feel* what you *understand*. Adam Clarke.

**Verse 7.** *Sing ye praises with understanding;* because in the full light of the new dispensation, the darkness of the patriarchal ages, the seeing as through a glass of the Levitical law, are turned into the vision of full and very reality. Hugo Victorinus.

**Verse 7.** *Sing ye praises with understanding.* Mark this, thou who daily readest the Psalms, and yet does not understand them. Simon de Muis.

**Verse 7.** *With understanding.* If they had sung *with understanding*, they had not adored stones. When a man sensible sang to a stone insensible, did he sing "*with understanding*"? But now, brethren, we see not with our eyes whom we adore, and yet correctly we adore. Much more is God commended to us, that with our eyes see him not. Augustine.

**Verse 9.** *The princes of the people are gathered together.* I note from hence, 1. That it is not impossible for great men to be good men; for the heads of a country to be members of Christ; and for princes as well as the people to serve the God of Abraham. It is said by the prophet, "upon my peace came great bitterness; ""a thousand fell on the left hand, but ten thousand at the right hand" Ps 91:7: ten perish in their prosperity, for one that falleth in adversity. *Homo victus in paradiso, victum in stercore:* Adam in the garden of pleasure was overcome by the subtil serpent, whereas Job on the

dunghill of misery was more than a conqueror. Woodmen say that deer are more circumspect in fat pastures; so the godly fear most in a rich estate: *nihil timendum video* (saith one), *timeo tamen*. (Seneca.) It is a sweet prayer of our church in the Litany, "Good Lord, deliver us in all time of our wealth, "insinuating that our minds are not so wanton as in abundance: yet, as you see, such is Christ's unspeakable goodness towards all sort of men, in preventing them even with the riches of his mercy, that not only the mean people, but also the mighty princes among the heathen are joined unto the church of the God of Abraham. *John Boys*.

**Verse 9.** *Gathered together*. Christ's gathering of the saints together unto him will be at his second coming, his coming to judgment, the general and final judgment. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." 2Th 2:1. *James Scott* (—1773), in "*A Collection of Sermons*, "1774.

**Verse 9.** *The people of the God of Abraham*. First, touching *the God of Abraham*, it is Christ, whose day Abraham desired to see, and in seeing whereof he did so much rejoice Joh 8:1-59; that is, not only the day of his birth, which he saw, as we learn by the oath which he caused his servant to take Ge 24:1-67 but also the day of his passion, which he saw long ago, and rejoiced in seeing it, when he said to his son Isaac in the mount, "The Lord will provide a sacrifice." Ge 22:8. Secondly, *The people of the God of Abraham*, are his children and posterity: not only that they are the seed of Abraham, coming out of his loins, and are "*the children of the flesh*" Ro 9:9; but "*the children of the promise*;" for if they that come out of Abraham's loins were only his children, then the Hagarins, the Turks, and Ishmaelites should be the people of God; "*But in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*" They that lay hold of the promise by faith, "They that are of the faith, are the children of Abraham" Ga 3:7, that have the same spirit of faith that Abraham had. As the apostle saith Ro 2:28, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly, but a Jew inwardly is the true Jew." They that worship the Messias by believing in him with the faith of Abraham, they are Abraham's children, and *the people of Abraham's God*, which thing John Baptist affirms Mt 3:1-17, "God can of stones raise up children unto Abraham." So the Gentiles, which worshipped stones, and therefore were "*like unto them*" Ps 115:1-18, were notwithstanding raised up to be children to Abraham. *Lancelot Andrewes*.

**Verse 9.** *The shields of the earth belong unto God*. There we have the *rulers* of the earth set forth by a double relation; the one *upward*, they are *scuta Deo*, they belong to God; the other *downward*, they are *scuta terae*, "*the shields of the earth*;" and both these noting two things, their *dignity* and their *duty*. They belong to God, it is their honour that he hath sealed them: they belong to God, it is their duty to be subject to him. They are *shields of the earth*, it is their honour that they are above others: they are *the shields of the earth*, it is their duty to protect others. *Edward Reynolds (Bishop)*.

**Verse 9.** *The shields of the earth are God's*, is understood by many as spoken of princes. I admit that this metaphor is of frequent occurrence in Scripture, nor does this sense seem to be unsuitable to the

scope of the passage...Yet the sense will be more simple if we explain the words thus: That, as it is God alone who defends and preserves the world, the high and supreme majesty which is sufficient for so exalted and difficult a work as the preservation of the world, is justly looked upon with admiration. The sacred writer expressly uses the word *shields* in the plural number, for, considering the various and almost innumerable dangers which unceasingly threaten every part of the world, the providence of God must necessarily interpose in many ways, and make use, as it were, of many bucklers. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 9.** *The shields of the earth.* Magistrates are said to *bear the sword*, not to be swords; and they are said *to be shields*, not to bear shields; and all this to show that protection and preservation are more essential and intrinsic to their office than destruction and punishment are. *Joseph Caryl.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** Unusual and enthusiastic expressions of joy when justifiable and even desirable.

**Verses 1-4.** Joy the true spirit of worship.

1. Joy in God's character.
2. In his reign.
3. In the triumphs of his gospel.
4. In his favour to his saints.

**Verse 2.** The terrors of the Lord viewed by faith as a subject of joy.

**Verse 2** (second clause). The universal reign of Christ as it is and is to be.

**Verse 3.** The hope of victory to the church. What shall be subdued? By whose instrumentality? Us. By whose power? He. When shall it be accomplished? What is the token of it? The ascension, Ps 47:5.

**Verse 3.**

1. The final triumph of the saints. All enemies subdued under them in earth and hell, within and without—(a) gradually, (b) completely.
2. The power by which it is accomplished. He shall, etc.
  - (a) Not without means.
  - (b) Not by means only.
  - (c) But by appointed means made potent by divine energy. *G. R.*

**Verse 4.** This comprehends time and eternity. It is a matter of fact, of holy acquiescence, of desire, of thankfulness.

**Verse 4.**

1. God is willing to choose our inheritance for us in time and eternity.
2. His choice is better than ours—the excellency of Jacob.

3. He will leave us to the consequences of our own choice.

4. He will help us in obtaining that which he chooses for us. *G. R.*

**Verse 5.** The ascension. Its publicity, solemnity, triumph, joy. Who went up. Where he went up. To what he went up. For what purpose. With what result.

**Verse 6.** The importance of holy song. The repetition rebukes our slackness, and implies that earnestness, frequency, delight, and universality should characterise the praises offered.

**Verse 7** (*last clause*). The psalmody of the instructed, and instruction by psalmody; praise should be both the fruit and the vehicle of teaching.

**Verse 8** (*last clause*). Divine sovereignty always connected with holiness.

**Verse 8.**

1. God has a throne of holiness, for which he is to be feared by all men.

2. A throne of grace, for which he is to be loved by his redeemed.

3. A throne of glory, for which he is to be praised by his whole creation.

**Verse 9.**

1. A shield is a *merciful* weapon, none more so.

2. A shield is a *venturous* weapon, a kind of surety, which bears the blows and receives the injuries which were intended for another.

3. A shield is a *strong* weapon, to repel the darts of wickedness and break them in pieces.

4. A shield is an honourable weapon, none more: taking away of shields was a sign of victory; preserving them a sign of glory.

5. Remember, a shield must ever *have an eye to guide it*—you the shields, the law the eye. *Bishop Reynolds.*

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## WORK UPON THE FORTY-SEVENTH PSALM

In the Works of JOHN BOYS, 1626, folio, pp. 931-937, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

### **Psalm 48**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

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**TITLE.** A Song and Psalm for the Sons of Korah. A song for joyfulness and a Psalm for reverence. Alas! every song is not a Psalm, for poets are not all heaven born, and every Psalm is not a song, for in coming before God we have to utter mournful confessions as well as exulting praises. The Sons of Korah were happy in having so large a selection of song; the worship where such a variety of music

was used could not become monotonous, but must have given widest scope for all the sacred passions of gracious souls.

**SUBJECT AND DIVISION.** It would be idle dogmatically to attribute this song to any one event of Jewish history. Its author and date are unknown. It records the withdrawal of certain confederate kings from Jerusalem, their courage failing them before striking a blow. The mention of the ships of Tarshish may allow us to conjecture that the Psalm was written in connection with the overthrow of Ammon, Moab, and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat; and if the reader will turn to 2 Chronicles 20, and note especially 2Ch 20:19,25,36, he will probably accept the suggestion. Ps 48:1-3, are in honour of the Lord and the city dedicated to his worship. From Ps 48:4-8 the song records the confusion of Zion's foes, ascribing all the praise to God; Ps 48:9-11 extolling Zion, and avowing Jehovah to be her God for evermore.

#### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Great is the Lord.* How great Jehovah is essentially none can conceive; but we can all see that he is great in the deliverance of his people, great in their esteem who are delivered, and great in the hearts of those enemies whom he scatters by their own fears. Instead of the mad cry of Ephesus, "Great is Diana," we bear the reasonable, demonstrable, self evident testimony, "Great is Jehovah." There is none great in the church but the Lord. Jesus is "the *great* Shepherd," he is "a Saviour, and a great one," our great God and Saviour, our great High Priest; his Father has divided him a portion with the great, and his name shall be great unto the ends of the earth. *And greatly to be praised.* According to his nature should his worship be; it cannot be too constant, too laudatory, too earnest, too reverential, too sublime. *In the city of our God.* He is great there, and should be greatly praised there. If all the world beside renounced Jehovah's worship, the chosen people in his favoured city should continue to adore him, for in their midst and on their behalf his glorious power has been so manifestly revealed. In the church the Lord is to be extolled though all the nations rage against him. Jerusalem was the peculiar abode of the God of Israel, the seat of the theocratic government, and the centre of prescribed worship, and even thus is the church the place of divine manifestation. *In the mountain of his holiness.* Where his holy temple, his holy priests, and his holy sacrifices might continually be seen. Zion was a mount, and as it was the most renowned part of the city, it is mentioned as a synonym for the city itself. The church of God is a mount for elevation and for conspicuousness, and it should be adorned with holiness, her sons being partakers of the holiness of God. Only by holy men can the Lord be fittingly praised, and they should be incessantly occupied with his worship.

**Verse 2.** *Beautiful for situation.* Jerusalem was so naturally, she was styled the Queen of the East; the church is so spiritually, being placed near God's heart, within the mountain of his power, upon the

hills of his faithfulness, in the centre of providential operations. The elevation of the church is her beauty. The more she is above the world the fairer she is. *The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.* Jerusalem was the world's star; whatever light lingered on earth was borrowed from the oracles preserved by Israel. An ardent Israelite would esteem the holy city as the eye of the nations, the most precious pearl of all lands. Certainly the church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world. *On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* Either meaning that Jerusalem was in the northern extremity of Judah, or it may denote that part of the city that lay to the north of Mount Zion. It was the glory of Jerusalem to be God's city, the place of his regal dwelling, and it is the joy of the church that God is in her midst. The great God is the great King of the church, and for her sake he rules all the nations. The people among whom the Lord deigns to dwell are privileged above all others; the lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage. We who dwell in Great Britain in the sides of the north, have this for our chief glory, that the Lord is known in our land, and the abode of his love is among us.

**Verse 3.** *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.* We worship no unknown God. We know him as our refuge in distress, we delight in him as such, and run to him in every time of need. We know nothing else as our refuge. Though we are made kings, and our houses are palaces, yet we have no confidence in ourselves, but trust in the Lord Protector, whose well known power is our bulwark.

**Verse 4.** *The kings were assembled, they passed by together.* They came and they went. No sooner together than scattered. They came one way and fled twenty ways. Boastful the gathering hosts with their royal leaders, despairing the fugitive bands with their astonished captains. They came like foam on the angry sea, like foam they melted away. This was so remarkable that the psalmist puts in a note of exclamation, *Lo! What!* have they so suddenly fled! Even thus shall the haters of the church vanish from the field. Papists, Ritualists, Arians, Sceptics, they shall each have their day, and shall pass on to the limbo of forgetfulness.

**Verse 5.** *They saw it, and so they marvelled.* They came, they saw, but they did not conquer. There was no *veni, vidi, vici* for them. No sooner did they perceive that the Lord was in the Holy City, than they took to their heels. Before the Lord came to blows with them, they were faint hearted, and beat a retreat. *They were troubled and hasted away.* The troublers were troubled. Their haste in coming was nothing to their hurry in going. Panic seized them, horses were not fleet enough; they would have borrowed the wings of the wind. They fled ignominiously, like children in a fright. Glory be to God, it shall be even thus with the foes of his church; when the Lord cometh to our help, our enemies shall be as nothing. Could they foresee their ignominious defeat, they would not advance to the attack.

**Verse 6.** *Fear took hold upon them there.* They were in Giant Despair's grip. Where they hoped to triumph, there they quivered with dismay. They did not take the city, but fear took hold on them. *And pain, as of a woman in travail.* They were as much overcome as a woman whose fright causes

premature delivery; or, as full of pain as a poor mother in her pangs—a strong expression, commonly employed by Orientals to set forth the extremity of anguish. When the Lord arises for the help of his church, the proudest of his foes shall be as trembling women, and their dismay shall be but the beginning of eternal defeat.

**Verse 7.** *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* As easily as vessels are driven to shipwreck, dost thou overturn the most powerful adversaries; or it may mean the strength of some nations lies in their ships, whose wooden walls are soon broken; but our strength is in our God, and therefore, it fails not; or there may be another meaning, though thou art our defence, yet thou takest vengeance on our inventions, and while thou dost preserve us, yet our ships, our comforts, our earthly ambitions, are taken from us that we may look alone to thee. God is seen at sea, but he is equally present on land. Speculative heresies, pretending to bring us wealth from afar, are constantly assailing the church, but the breath of the Lord soon drives them to destruction. The church too often relies on the wisdom of men, and these human helps are soon shipwrecked; yet the church itself is safe beneath the care of her God and King.

**Verse 8.** *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.* Our father's stories are reproduced before our very eyes. We heard the promise, and we have seen the fulfilment. The records of Zion, wonderful as they are, are proved to be truthful, because present facts are in perfect harmony therewith. Note how the Lord is first spoken of as *Lord of hosts*, a name of power and sovereignty, and then as *our God*, a name of covenant relation and condescension. No wonder that since the Lord bears both titles, we find him dealing with us after the precedents of his lovingkindness, and the faithfulness of his promises. *God will establish it for ever.* The true church can never be disestablished. That which kings establish can last for time only, that which God establishes endures to all eternity. *Selah.* Here is a fit place to pause, viewing the past with admiration, and the future with confidence.

**Verse 9.** *We have thought.* Holy men are thoughtful men; they do not suffer God's wonders to pass before their eyes and melt into forgetfulness, but they meditate deeply upon them. *Of thy lovingkindness, O God.* What a delightful subject! Devout minds never tire of so divine a theme. It is well to think of past lovingkindness in times of trial, and equally profitable to remember it in seasons of prosperity. Grateful memories sweeten sorrows and sober joys. *In the midst of thy temple.* Fit place for so devout a meditation. Where God is most seen he is best loved. The assembled saints constitute a living temple, and our deepest musings when so gathered together should have regard to the lovingkindness of the Lord, exhibited in the varied experiences of each of the living stones. Memories of mercy should be associated with continuance of praise. Hard by the table of show bread commemorating his bounty, should stand the altar of incense denoting our praise.

**Verse 10.** *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.* Great fame is

due to his great name. The glory of Jehovah's exploits overleaps the boundaries of earth; angels behold with wonder, and from every star delighted intelligences proclaim his fame beyond the ends of the earth. What if men are silent, yet the woods, and seas, and mountains, with all their countless tribes, and all the unseen spirits that walk them, are full of the divine praise. As in a shell we listen to the murmurs of the sea, so in the convolutions of creation we hear the praises of God. *Thy right hand is full of righteousness.* Thy sceptre and thy sword, thy government and thy vengeance, are altogether just. Thy hand is never empty, but full of energy, of bounty, and of equity. Neither saint nor sinner shall find the Lord to be an empty handed God; he will in both cases deal out righteousness to the full: to the one, through Jesus, he will be just to forgive, to the other just to condemn.

**Verse 11.** *Let mount Zion rejoice.* As the first of the cities of Judah, and the main object of the enemies' attack, let her lead the song. *Let the daughters of Judah be glad,* let the smaller towns join the chorus, for they join in the common victory. Let the women, who fare worst in the havoc of war, be among the gladdest of the glad, now that the spoilers have fled. All the church, and each individual member, should rejoice in the Lord, and magnify his name. *Because of thy judgments.* The righteous acts of the Lord are legitimate subjects for joyful praise. However it may appear on earth, yet in heaven the eternal ruin of the wicked will be the theme of adoring song. Re 19:1,3: "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Justice which to our poor optics now seems severe, will then be perceived to be perfectly consistent with God's name of love, and to be one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

**Verse 12.** *Walk about Zion;* often beat her bounds, even as Israel marched around Jericho. With leisurely and careful inspection survey her. *And go round about her.* Encircle her again and again with loving perambulations. We cannot too frequently or too deeply consider the origin, privileges, history, security, and glory of the church. Some subjects deserve but a passing thought; this is worthy of the most patient consideration. *Tell the towers thereof.* See if any of them have crumbled, or have been demolished. Is the church of God what she was in doctrine, in strength and in beauty? Her foes counted her towers in envy first, and then in terror, let us count them with sacred exultation. The city of Lucerne, encircled by its ancient walls, adorned with a succession of towers, is a visible illustration of this figure; and as we have gone around it, and paused at each picturesque tower, we have realised the loving lingering inspection which the metaphor implies.

**Verse 13.** *Mark ye well her bulwarks.* Consider most attentively how strong are her ramparts, how safely her inhabitants are entrenched behind successive lines of defence. The security of the people of God is not a doctrine to be kept in the background, it may be safely taught, and frequently pondered; only to base hearts will that glorious truth prove harmful; the sons of perdition make a

stumbling stone even of the Lord Jesus himself, it is little wonder that they pervert the truth of God concerning the final perseverance of the saints. We are not to turn away from inspecting Zion's ramparts, because idlers skulk behind them. *Consider her palaces.* Examine with care the fair dwellings of the city. Let the royal promises which afford quiet resting places for believers be attentively inspected. See how sound are the defences, and how fair are the pleasaunces of "that ancient citie, "of which you are citizens. A man should be best acquainted with his own home; and the church is our dear and blest abode. Would to God professors were more considerate of the condition of the church; so far from telling the towers, some of them scarcely know what or where they are; they are too busy counting their money, and considering their ledgers. Freehold and copyhold, and leasehold, men measure to an inch, but heaven hold and grace hold are too often taken at peradventure, and neglected in sheer heedlessness. *That ye may tell it to the generation following.* An excellent reason for studious observation. We have received and we must transmit. We must be students that we may be teachers. The debt we owe to the past we must endeavour to repay by handing down the truth to the future.

**Verse 14.** *For this God is our God for ever and ever.* A good reason for preserving a record of all that he has wrought. Israel will not change her God so as to wish to forget, nor will the Lord change so as to make the past mere history. He will be the covenant God of his people world without end. There is no other God, we wish for no other, we would have no other even if there were. There are some who are so ready to comfort the wicked, that for the sake of ending their punishment they weaken the force of language, and make *for ever and ever* mean but a time; nevertheless, despite their interpretations we exult in the hope of an eternity of bliss, and to us "everlasting, " and "for ever and ever" mean what they say. *He will be our guide even unto death.* Throughout life, and to our dying couch, he will graciously conduct us, and even after death he will lead us to the living fountains of waters. We look to him for resurrection and eternal life. This consolation is clearly derivable from what has gone before; hitherto our foes have been scattered, and our bulwarks have defied attack, for God has been in our midst, therefore all possible assaults in the future shall be equally futile.

"The church has all her foes defied

And laughed to scorn their rage;

Even thus for aye she shall abide

Secure from age to age."

Farewell, fear. Come hither, gratitude and faith, and sing right joyously.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**TITLE.** A Song and Psalm. Wherein both voice and instrument were used; the voice began first and the instrument after: and where the inscription is a Psalm and Song, there likely the instrument began

and the voice followed. *John Richardson.*

**Whole Psalm.** According to Dr. Lightfoot, the constant and ordinary Psalm for the second day of the week was the forty-eighth.

**Verse 1.** *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God,* etc. The prophet, being about to praise a certain edifice, commences by praising the architect, and says that in the holy city the wonderful skill and wisdom of God, who built it, is truly displayed. *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;* and so he is, whether we look at his essence, his power, his wisdom, his justice, or his mercy, for all are infinite, everlasting, and incomprehensible; and thus, so much is God *greatly to be praised,* that all the angels, all men, even all his own works would not suffice thereto; but of all things revealed, there is no one thing can give us a greater idea of his greatness, or for which we should praise and thank him more, than the establishment of his church; and therefore, the prophet adds, *in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness;* that is to say, the greatness of God, and for which he deserves so much praise, is conspicuous in the foundation and construction of his church. *Robert Bellarmine (Cardinal).*

**Verse 1.** *Great is the Lord.* Greater, Job 33:12. Greatest of all, Ps 95:3. Greatness itself, Ps 145:3. A degree he is above the superlative. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 1.** *Mountain of his holiness.* The religion in it holy, the people in it a holy people. *William Nicholson.*

**Verse 2.** *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* What is there, or was there, about Zion to justify the high eulogium of David? The situation is indeed eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel. Rising high above the deep valley of Gihon and Hinnom, on the west and south, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the east, it could only be assailed from the northwest; and then *on the sides of the north* it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers, and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations: *"For the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away."* At the thought of it the royal psalmist again bursts forth in triumph: *"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following."* Alas! her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following. There is another Zion, however, whose towers are still more glorious, and shall never be overthrown. *"God is known in her palaces for a refuge."* And *"this God is our God for ever and ever."* How often is this name synonymous with the church of the living God! and no other spot but one can divide with it the affection of his people—no other name but one can awaken such joyful hopes in the Christian's heart. The temporal Zion is now in the dust, but the true Zion is rising and shaking herself

from it, and putting on her beautiful garments to welcome her King when he comes to reign over the whole earth. *W. M. Thompson, D.D.*

**Verse 2.** When I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city, crowning those battlemented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed, *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilded each dome of mosque and church, and at length, bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram. No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet. *J. L. Porter.*

**Verse 2.** (*first clause*). *Beautiful in climate*, that is, Mount Zion is situated in a fair and lovely climate. This is the view taken by Montanus and Ainsworth. Bate and Parkhurst read, "*Beautiful in extension, i.e., in the prospect which it extends to the eye.*" *Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

**Verse 2.** *Beautiful for situation.* This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground, which was thus beautified with holiness, be called *the joy of the whole earth*, i.e., what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, because God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 2.** *Beautiful for situation.*

—Fair Jerusalem

The holy city, lifted high her towers,  
And higher yet the glorious temple reared  
Her pile, far off appearing like a mount  
Of alabaster, topped with golden spires.

—*John Milton in "Paradise Regained."*

**Verse 2.** *On the sides of the north.* Jerusalem, that is the upper and best part of it, was built on the north side of Mount Zion. *Hadrian Reland, 1676-1718.*

**Verse 2.** Jerusalem lay to the north of Sion, and this circumstance is mentioned as a proof of Mount Zion's greatest security, for it was almost inaccessible on any other side except the north, and there it was defended by Jerusalem, which was very strong. *Samuel Burder.*

**Verse 2.** *The great King.* God is named the *great King* in opposition to the kings in Ps 48:4. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 4.** They were many and powerful: kings and a plurality of them. They were confederate kings. *The kings were assembled.* Forces united are the more powerful. But all the endeavours of these confederate kings came to nothing. *They passed by together*—together they came, and together they vanished. *William Nicholson.*

**Verses 5-6.** The potentates of the world saw the miracles of the apostles, the courage and constancy of the martyrs, and the daily increase of the church, notwithstanding all their persecutions; they beheld with astonishment the rapid progress of the faith through the Roman empire; they called upon their gods, but their gods could not help themselves; idolatry expired at the foot of the victorious cross. *George Horne.*

**Verse 6.** *Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.* Nothing is more unaccountable than panic. No man, no body of men can adequately guard against such terror. He who made the ears can easily make them to tingle. He who holds the winds in his fist, can easily make them whisper alarm, or roar dismay. This is specially to be expected when men so act as to have their own conscience against them. Job 15:21. But God can at any time so forsake men as that they shall be unmanned, and play the fool exceedingly. Le 26:36. Men have fought bravely several battles, and then played the coward. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 7.** *Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.* It is only by her Lord that the church gained "the true riches; "when she enters into traffick with the world, she takes the means of the world for her resources; and when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, in earthly cunning, to make merchandise, the instruments she adopts come to nothing in her hands, and leave her helpless and poor. *From "A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms (The Prayer Book Version), chiefly founded on the Fathers, "1859.*

**Verse 7.** *With an east wind,* which, in Judea, is a very violent and destructive wind. Kennicot renders the verse thus, *As the east wind dasheth in pieces the ships of Tarshish;* founding his conjecture upon the similarity in form of two Hebrew letters, signifying the one *in,* and the other *as.* *Daniel Cresswell.*

**Verse 9.** *We have thought.* The Hebrew (Mwd) and (Mmd) and (hmd) belong all to the same signification, of *quiet, rest, silence, patient expecting, thinking, considering,* and must be determined to any of these senses by the context. And here that of *expecting* or *patient waiting,* with *affiance* in him, and without all *distrust* or *repining* at his *delays,* seems to be most proper for it. For coming to the sanctuary to pray for mercy, it is most agreeable to say *we wait for it there,* as in the place where he hath promised to afford it, in return to *prayers.* *Henry Hammond.*

**Verses 12-13.** In a spiritual sense *the towers* and *bulwarks* of Sion are those doctrines of the true faith, which are the strength and glory of the church, which are to be maintained in their soundness and stability against the assaults of heretical teachers, so that they may be transmitted unimpaired to following generations. *Origen and Theodoret, quoted by Wordsworth.*

**Verse 13.** *Mark ye well her bulwarks.* Margin as in the Hebrew, *"Set your heart to her bulwarks."* That is, pay close attention to them; make the investigation with care, not as one does whose heart is not in the thing, and who does it negligently. The word rendered *bulwarks,* (lyx), *khail*—means properly, a

host or army, and then a fortification or entrenchment, especially the *ditch* or *trench*, with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it. 2Sa 20:15 Isa 26:1. (*Gesenius, Lex.*)—*Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 13.** *Mark ye well: set your heart,* mind earnestly, set your affections on. *Henry Ainsworth.*

**Verse 13.** *Her bulwarks.*

1. The designation and constitution of Jesus Christ to be King of the church, King of Zion, is the great bulwark of Zion.
2. The second bulwark of Zion is the promises of God, which are innumerable.
3. The watchful providence of God over the church.
4. Another bulwark is God's special presence. God is in a special manner present in his church.
5. The last bulwark unto which all others may be reduced, is the covenant of God: "For this God is our God." *John Owen.*

**Verse 14.** *This God is our God for ever and ever.* What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or have a right to say, "This glorious God with all his divine perfections is my God, for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from his love." *George Burder.*

**Verse 14.** *This God is our God.* The people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation: "Let Mount Zion rejoice, " etc. Mark, "That ye may tell the generation following, " *For this is our God.* See their ostentation of him! This God; *q.d.*, Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is. And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation. "This God is our God *for ever and ever.*" *John Howe.*

**Verse 14.** God is not only a satisfying portion, filling every crevice of thy soul with the light of joy and comfort; and a sanctifying portion, elevating thy soul to its primitive and original perfection; and a universal portion; not health, or wealth, or friends, or honours, or liberty, or life, or house, or wife, or child, or pardon, or peace, or grace, or glory, or earth, or heaven, but all these, and infinitely more, but also he is an eternal portion. This God would be thy God *for ever and ever.* Oh, sweet word *ever!* thou art the crown of the saints' crown, and the glory of their glory. Their portion is so full that they desire no more; they enjoy variety and plenty of delights above what they are able to ask or think, and want nothing but to have it fixed. May they but possess it in peace without interruption or cessation, they will trample all kingdoms of the earth as dirt under their feet; and lo! thou art the welcome dove to bring this olive branch in thy mouth. *This God is our God for ever and ever.* All the arithmetical

figures of days, and months, and years, and ages, are nothing to this infinite cipher *ever*, which, though it stand for nothing in the vulgar account, yet contains all our millions; yea, our millions and millions of millions are less than drops in this ocean *ever*. *George Swinnock*.

**Verse 14.** Some expositors have strangely found a difficulty in the last verse, deeming such a profession of personal faith as inappropriate termination for a national song. Even Dr. Delitzch, a wise and devout interpreter, shares in this notion; going, indeed, so far as to throw out the surmise, that some word must have been lost from the Hebrew text. To me it seems that the verse, as it stands, is admirably in harmony with the song, and is its crowning beauty. When the Lord does great things for church or nation, he means that all the faithful, however humble their station, should take courage from it, should repose in him fresh confidence, and cling to him with a firmer hope, and say, *This God shall be our God for ever; he will guide us even unto death*. *William Binnie*.

**Verse 14.** *Unto death*, or as some explain it, *at death*, *i.e.*, he will save us from it; others, *over death*, beyond it. But the most obvious explanation, and the one most agreeable to usage, is that which makes the phrase mean even to the end of life, or as long as we live. The idea of a future state, though not expressed, is not excluded. *J. A. Alexander*.

**Verse 14.** (*last clause*). The last clause is much misunderstood. It is not, "Our guide *unto death*, "for the words are, (twm-le wngny), "shall lead us *over death*." Surely it means, "It is he who leads *over death to resurrection*"—over Jordan to Canaan. The (Heb.) is used in Le 15:25, for "*beyond*, "in regard to time, and is not this the sense here? "*Beyond the time of death*"? Till death is to us *over*? Till we have *stood upon the grace of death*? Yes; he it is who leads us on to this last victory; he swallows up death in victory, and leads us to *trample on death*. And so viewed, we easily discern the beautiful link of thought that joins this Psalm to that which follows. Such is the celebration of *The Mighty One become the glory of Jerusalem*. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

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#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

All the suggestions under this Psalm except those otherwise designated, are by our beloved friend, Rev. George Rogers, Tutor of the Pastor's College.

**Verse 1.**

1. *What the church is to God.*

(a) His "*city*:" not a lawless rabble, but a well organised community.

(b) A mountain of holiness, for the display of justifying righteousness, of sanctifying grace.

2. *What God is to the church.*

(a) Its inhabitant. It is *his* city, his mountain. There he is great. There was no room for the whole of God in Paradise, there is no room for him in his law, no room for him in the heaven of angels: in the church only is there room for all his perfections, for a triune Jehovah. Great everywhere, he is

peculiarly great here.

(b) The object of its praises. As he is greatest here, so are his praises, and through the universe on this account.

**Verse 2.**

1. *Was the ancient Zion beautiful for situation?* So is the New Testament church founded upon a rock, upon eternal purpose and grace.

2. *Was it the joy of the whole earth?* So the New Testament church will become.

3. *Was it the special joy of the tribes of Israel* that were almost entirely to the north of Jerusalem? So the church is to the saints.

4. *Was it a royal as well as a holy city?* So is the church. "Yet I have set, "etc.

**Verse 3.**

1. God is a refuge in his church. The church is a city of refuge, but the refuge is not in its church, but its God.

(a) For sinners from wrath.

(b) For saints from trials and fears.

(c) God is there known as such, known to thousands, not known as such elsewhere. "They that know thy name, "etc.

**Verses 4-7.**

1. The opposition of worldly powers to the church. "The kings, "etc.

2. The manner in which they are subdued—by their own fears; conscience has persecuted those who have persecuted the church of God. They who have seized the ark of God have been glad to return it with an offering.

3. The completeness of their overthrow, As a fleet of ships of Tarshish, dispersed, broken, and engulfed by the east wind.

**Verse 8.**

1. God has ever been to his people what he now is; the same *heard as seen*.

2. He is now what he ever has been: the same *seen as heard*.

3. He will ever be what he now is. "Will establish it for ever."

**Verse 9.**

1. What are the lovingkindnesses of God? Pity to the wretched, pardon to the penitent, help to the prayerful, comfort to the afflicted, etc.

2. Where are they to be found? "In the midst of, "etc.

(a) Here they are revealed.

(b) Here they are dispensed.

(c) Here they are sought.

(d) Here they are enjoyed.

**Verse 10.** As the name of God, so his praises are—

1. Supreme.
2. Unqualified.
3. Universal.
4. Everlasting.

**Verse 10.** *Thy right hand, etc.*

1. The justice of omnipotence.
2. Omnipotence controlled by justice.
3. The omnipotence of justice.

**Verse 11.**

1. The subjects of his peoples' joy. Not mercies merely, but judgments
2. Reasons: (a) Because they are holy—needful to the purity of moral government; (b) Just—needful to vindicate law; (c) Good—needful for the greatest amount of good.

**Verse 12.**

1. What is to be understood by the preservation and protection of the church?
2. What is meant by searching into, and considering of, these causes and means of the church's preservation?
3. What are those causes and means of the church's preservation, those towers and bulwarks which will not fail?
4. What reason is there why we should thus search into and consider these causes of the church's preservation and protection?
5. What is the testimony which we have to give concerning this matter to the ensuing generation?

*John Owen's Sermon.*

**Verse 14.** (*first clause*). This is the language of a *proprietary* in God: 1. Of an *assured* proprietary—"This God is *our* God." 2. Of a *permanent* proprietary—*for ever and ever*. 3. Of an *exulting* proprietary. *W. Jay.*

**Verse 14.**

1. The language of discrimination. *This* God. *This* God in Christ, in the church.
2. The language of Faith—*our* God.
3. Of Hope—*For ever and ever*.
4. Of Resignation—*He will be our guide, etc.*

**Psalm 49**

Exposition

## Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

### Hints to the Village Preacher

**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician, a Psalm for the sons of Korah. This is precisely the same as on former occasions, and no remark is needed.

**DIVISION.** The poet musician sings, to the accompaniment of his harp, the despicable character of those who trust in their wealth, and so he consoles the oppressed believer. The first four verses are a preface; from Ps 49:5-12 all fear of great oppressors is removed by the remembrance of their end and their folly; Ps 49:13 contains an expression of wonder at the perpetuity of folly; Ps 49:14-15 contrast the ungodly and the righteous in their future; and from Ps 49:16-20 the lesson from the whole is given in an admonitory form. Note the chorus in Ps 49:2,20, and also the two Selahs.

### EXPOSITION

**Verses 1-4.** In these four verses the poet prophet calls universal humanity to listen to his didactic hymn.

**Verse 1.** *Hear this, all ye people.* All men are concerned in the subject, it is *of* them, and therefore *to* them that the psalmist would speak. It is not a topic which men delight to consider, and therefore he who would instruct them must press them to give ear. Where, as in this case, the theme claims to be wisdom and understanding, attention is very properly demanded; and when the style combines the sententiousness of the proverb with the sweetness of poesy, interest is readily excited. *Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.* "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Men dwelling in all climes are equally concerned in the subject, for the laws of providence are the same in all lands. It is wise for each one to feel I am a man, and therefore everything which concerns mortals has a personal interest to me. We must all appear before the judgment seat, and therefore we all should give earnest heed to holy admonition which may help us to prepare for that dread event. He who refuses to receive instruction by the ear, will not be able to escape receiving destruction by it when the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed."

**Verse 2.** *Both low and high, rich and poor, together.* Sons of great men, and children of mean men, men of large estate, and ye who pine in poverty, ye are all bidden to hear the inspired minstrel as he touches his harp to a mournful but instructive lay. The low will be encouraged, the high will be warned, the rich will be sobered, the poor consoled, there will be a useful lesson for each if they are willing to learn it. Our preaching ought to have a voice for all classes, and all should have an ear for it. To suit our word to the rich alone is wicked sycophancy, and to aim only at pleasing the poor is to act the part of a demagogue. Truth may be so spoken as to command the ear of all, and wise men seek to learn that acceptable style. Rich and poor must soon meet together in the grave, they may well be

content to meet together now. In the congregation of the dead all differences of rank will be obliterated, they ought not now to be obstructions to united instructions.

**Verse 3.** *My mouth shall speak of wisdom.* Inspired and therefore lifted beyond himself, the prophet is not praising his own attainments, but extolling the divine Spirit which spoke in him. He knew that the Spirit of truth and wisdom spoke through him. He who is not sure that his matter is good has no right to ask a hearing. *And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.* The same Spirit who made the ancient seers eloquent, also made them thoughtful. The help of the Holy Ghost was never meant to supersede the use of our own mental powers. The Holy Spirit does not make us speak as Balaam's ass, which merely uttered sounds, but never meditated; but he first leads us to consider and reflect, and then he gives us the tongue of fire to speak with power.

**Verse 4.** *I will incline mine ear to a parable.* He who would have others hear, begins by hearing himself. As the minstrel leans his ear to his harp, so must the preacher give his whole soul to his ministry. The truth came to the psalmist as a parable, and he endeavoured to unriddle it for popular use; he would not leave the truth in obscurity, but he listened to its voice till he so well understood it as to be able to interpret and translate it into the common language of the multitude. Still of necessity it would remain a problem, and a dark saying to the unenlightened many, but this would not be the songster's fault, for, saith he, *I will open my dark saying upon the harp.* The writer was no mystic, delighting in deep and cloudy things, yet he was not afraid of the most profound topics; he tried to open the treasures of darkness, and to uplift pearls from the deep. To win attention he cast his proverbial philosophy into the form of song, and tuned his harp to the solemn tone of his subject. Let us gather round the minstrel of the King of kings, and hear the Psalm which first was led by the chief musician, as the chorus of the sons of Korah lifted up their voices in the temple.

**Verse 5.** *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* The man of God looks calmly forward to dark times when those evils which have dogged his heels shall gain a temporary advantage over him. Iniquitous men, here called in the abstract *iniquity*, lie in wait for the righteous, as serpents that aim at the heels of travellers: the iniquity of our heels is that evil which aims to trip us up or impede us. It was an old prophecy that the serpent should wound the heel of the woman's seed, and the enemy of our souls is diligent to fulfil that premonition. In some dreary part of our road it may be that evil will wax stronger and bolder, and gaining upon us will openly assail us; those who followed at our heels like a pack of wolves, may perhaps overtake us, and compass us about. What then? Shall we yield to cowardice? Shall we be a prey to their teeth? God forbid. Nay, we will not even fear, for what are these foes? What indeed, but mortal men who shall perish and pass away? There can be no real ground of alarm to the faithful. Their enemies are too insignificant to be worthy of one thrill of fear. Doth not the Lord say to us, "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee; who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of

man which shall be made as grass?" Scholars have given other renderings of this verse, but we prefer to keep to the authorised version when we can, and in this case we find in it precisely the same meaning which those would give to it who translate *my heels*, by the words "*my supplanters*."

**Verse 6.** What if the good man's foes be among the great ones of the earth! yet he need not fear them. *They that trust in their wealth*. Poor fools, to be content with such a rotten confidence. When we set our rock in contrast with theirs, it would be folly to be afraid of them. Even though they are loud in their brags, we can afford to smile. What if they glory *and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches?* yet while we glory in our God we are not dismayed by their proud threatenings. Great strength, position, and estate, make wicked men very lofty in their own esteem, and tyrannical towards others; but the heir of heaven is not overawed by their dignity, nor cowed by their haughtiness. He sees the small value of riches, and the helplessness of their owners in the hour of death, and therefore he is not so mean as to be afraid of an ephemera, a moth, a bubble.

**Verse 7.** *None of them can by any means redeem his brother*. With all their riches, the whole of them put together could not rescue a comrade from the chill grasp of death. They boast of what they will do with us, let them see to themselves. Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave. The poor are their equals in this respect; let them love their friend ever so dearly, they cannot *give to God a ransom for him*. A king's ransom would be of no avail, a Monte Rosa of rubies, an America of silver, a world of gold, a sun of diamonds, would all be utterly contemned. O ye boasters, think not to terrify us with your worthless wealth, go ye and intimidate death before ye threaten men in whom is immortality and life.

**Verse 8.** *For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever*. Too great is the price, the purchase is hopeless. For ever must the attempt to redeem a soul with money remain a failure. Death comes and wealth cannot bribe him; hell follows and no golden key can unlock its dungeon. Vain, then, are your threatenings, ye possessors of the yellow clay; your childish toys are despised by men who estimate the value of possessions by the shekel of the sanctuary.

**Verse 9.** No price could secure for any man *that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption*. Mad are men now after gold, what would they be if it could buy the elixir of immortality? Gold is lavished out of the bag to cheat the worm of the poor body by embalming it, or enshrining it in a coffin of lead, but it is a miserable business, a very burlesque and comedy. As for the soul, it is too subtle a thing to be detained when it hears the divine command to soar through tracks unknown. Never, therefore, will we fear those base nibblers at our heels, whose boasted treasure proves to be so powerless to save.

**Verse 10.** *For he seeth that wise men die*. Every one sees this. The proud persecuting rich man cannot help seeing it. He cannot shut his eyes to the fact that wiser men than he are dying, and that he also, with all his craft, must die. *Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*. Folly has no

immunity from death. Off goes the jester's cap, as well as the student's gown. Jollity cannot laugh off the dying hour; death who visits the university, does not spare the tavern. Thoughtlessness and brutishness meet their end as surely as much care and wasting study. In fact, while the truly wise, so far as this world is concerned, *die*, the fool has a worse lot, for he *perishes*, is blotted out of remembrance, bewailed by none, remembered no more. *And leave their wealth to others*. Not a farthing can they carry with them. Whether heirs male of their own body, lawfully begotten, inherit their estates, or they remain unclaimed, it matters not, their hoardings are no longer theirs; friends may quarrel over their property, or strangers divide it as spoil, they cannot interfere. Ye boasters, hold ye your own, before ye dream of despoiling the sons of the living God. Keep shoes to your own feet in death's dark pilgrimage, ere ye seek to bite our heels.

**Verse 11.** *Their inward thought is, their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations*. He is very foolish who is more a fool in his inmost thought than he dare to be in his speech. Such rotten fruit, rotten at the core, are worldlings. Down deep in their hearts, though they dare not say so, they fancy that earthly goods are real and enduring. Foolish dreamers! The frequent dilapidation of their castles and manor houses should teach them better, but still they cherish the delusion. They cannot tell the mirage from the true streams of water; they fancy rainbows to be stable, and clouds to be the everlasting hills. *They call their lands after their own names*. Common enough is this practice. His grounds are made to bear the groundling's name, he might as well write it on the water. Men have even called countries by their own names, but what are they the better for the idle compliment, even if men perpetuate their nomenclature?

**Verse 12.** *Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not*. He is but a lodger for the hour, and does not stay a night: even when he dwells in marble halls his notice to quit is written out. Eminence is evermore in imminence of peril. The hero of the hour lasts but for an hour. Sceptres fall from the paralysed hands which once grasped them, and coronets slip away from skulls when the life is departed. *He is like the beasts that perish*. He is not like the sheep which are preserved of the Great Shepherd, but like the hunted beast which is doomed to die. He lives a brutish life and dies a brutish death. Wallowing in riches, surfeited with pleasure, he is fatted for the slaughter, and dies like the ox in the shambles. Alas! that so noble a creature should use his life so unworthily, and end it so disgracefully. So far as this world is concerned, wherein does the death of many men differ from the death of a dog? They go down—

"To the vile dust from whence they sprung,  
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

What room is there, then, for fear to the godly when such natural brute beasts assail them? Should they not in patience possess their souls? We make a break here, because this stanza appears to be the refrain of the song, and as such is repeated in Ps 49:20.

**Verse 13.** Their vain confidences are not casual aberrations from the path of wisdom, but *their way*, their usual and regular course; their whole life is regulated by such principles. Their life path is essential *folly*. They are fools ingrain. From first to last brutishness is their characteristic, grovelling stupidity the leading trait of their conduct. *Yet their posterity approve their sayings*. Those who follow them in descent follow them in folly, quote their worldly maxims, and accept their mad career as the most prudent mode of life. Why do they not see by their father's failure their father's folly? No, the race transmits its weakness. Grace is not hereditary, but sordid worldliness goes from generation to generation. The race of fools never dies out. No need of missionaries to teach men to be earthworms, they crawl naturally to the dust. *Selah*. Well may the minstrel pause, and bid us muse upon the deep seated madness of the sons of Adam. Take occasion, reader, to reflect upon thine own.

**Verse 14.** *Like sheep they are laid in the grave*. As dumb driven cattle, they are hurried to their doom, and are penned in within the gates of destruction. As sheep that go whither they are driven, and follow their leader without thought, so these men who have chosen to make this world their all, are urged on by their passions, till they find themselves at their journey's end, that end the depths of Hades. Or if we keep to our own translation, we have the idea of their dying peaceably, and being buried in quiet, only that they may wake up to be ashamed at the last great day. *Death shall feed on them*. Death like a grim shepherd leads them on, and conducts them to the place of their eternal pasturage, where all is barrenness and misery. The righteous are led by the Good Shepherd, but the ungodly have death for their shepherd, and he drives them onward to hell. As the power of death rules them in this world, for they have not passed from death unto life, so the terrors of death shall devour them in the world to come. As grim giants, in old stories, are said to feed on men whom they entice to their caves, so death, the monster, feeds on the flesh and blood of the mighty. *The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*. The poor saints were once the tail, but at the day break they shall be the head. Sinners rule till night fall; their honours wither in the evening, and in the morning they find their position utterly reversed. The sweetest reflection to the upright is that "the morning" here intended begins an endless, changeless, day. What a vexation of spirit to the proud worldling, when the Judge of all the earth holds his morning session, to see the man whom he despised, exalted high in heaven, while he himself is cast away! *And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling*. Whatever of glory the ungodly had shall disappear in the tomb. Form and comeliness shall vanish from them, the worm shall make sad havoc of all their beauty. Even their last dwelling place, the grave, shall not be able to protect the relics committed to it; their bodies shall dissolve, no trace shall remain of all their strong limbs and lofty heads, no vestige of remaining beauty shall be discoverable. The beauty of the righteous is not yet revealed, it waits its manifestations; but all the beauty the wicked will ever have is in full bloom in this life; it will wither,

fade, decay, rot, and utterly pass away. Who, then, would envy or fear the proud sinner?

**Verse 15.** *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.* Forth from that temporary resting place we shall come in due time, quickened by divine energy. Like our risen Head we cannot be holden by the bands of the grave; redemption has emancipated us from the slavery of death. No redemption could man find in riches, but God has found it in the blood of his dear Son. Our Elder Brother has given to God a ransom, and we are the redeemed of the Lord: because of this redemption by price we shall assuredly be redeemed by power out of the hand of the last enemy. *For he shall receive me.* He shall take me out of the tomb, take me up to heaven. If it is not said of me as of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him," yet shall I reach the same glorious state. My spirit God will receive, and my body shall sleep in Jesus till, being raised in his image, it shall also be received into glory. How infinitely superior is such a hope to anything which our oppressors can boast! Here is something which will bear meditation, and therefore again let us pause, at the bidding of the musician, who inserts a *Selah*.

**Verse 16.** In these last verses the psalmist becomes a preacher, and gives admonitory lessons which he has himself gathered from experience. *Be not thou afraid when one is made rich.* Let it not give thee any concern to see the godless prosper. Raise no questions as to divine justice; suffer no foreboding to cloud thy mind. Temporal prosperity is too small a matter to be worth fretting about; let the dogs have their bones, and the swine their draff. *When the glory of his house is increased.* Though the sinner and his family are in great esteem, and stand exceedingly high, never mind; all things will be righted in due time. Only those whose judgment is worthless will esteem men the more because their lands are broader; those who are highly estimated for such unreasonable reasons will find their level ere long, when truth and righteousness come to the fore.

**Verse 17.** *For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.* He has but a leasehold of his acres, and death ends his tenure. Through the river of death man must pass naked. Not a rag of all his raiment, not a coin of all his treasure, not a joy of all his honour, can the dying worldling carry with him. Why then fret ourselves about so fleeting a prosperity? *His glory shall not descend after him.* As he goes down, down, down for ever, none of his honours or possessions will follow him. Patents of nobility are invalid in the sepulchre. His worship, his honour, his lordship, and his grace, will alike find their titles ridiculous in the tomb. Hell knows no aristocracy. Your dainty and delicate sinners shall find that eternal burnings have no respect for their affectations and refinements.

**Verse 18.** *Though while he lived he blessed his soul.* He pronounced himself happy. He had his good things in this life. His chief end and aim were to bless himself. He was charmed with the adulation of flatterers. *Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.* The generality of men worship success, however it may be gained. The colour of the winning horse is no matter; it is the winner, and that is enough. "Take care of Number One," is the world's proverbial philosophy, and he who gives

good heed to it is "a clever fellow, ""a fine man of business, ""a shrewd common sense tradesman, ""a man with his head put on the right way." Get money, and you will be "respectable, ""a substantial man, "and your house will be "an eminent firm in the city, "or "one of the best county families." To do good wins fame in heaven, but to do good *to yourself* is the prudent thing among men of the world. Yet not a whisper of worldly congratulation can follow the departing millionaire; they say he died worth a mint of money, but what charm has that fact to the dull cold ear of death? The banker rots as fast as the shoeblack, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper. Alas! poor wealth, thou art but the rainbow colouring of the bubble, the tint which yellows the morning mist, but adds not substance to it.

**Verse 19.** *He shall go to the generation of his fathers.* Where the former generations lie, the present shall also slumber. The sires beckon to their sons to come to the same land of forgetfulness. Mortal fathers beget not immortal children. As our ancestors have departed, so also must we. *They shall never see light.* To this upper region the dead worldling shall never return again to possess his estates, and enjoy his dignities. Among the dead he must lie in the thick darkness, where no joy or hope can come to him. Of all his treasures there remains not enough to furnish him one poor candle; the blaze of his glory is out for ever, and not a spark remains to cheer him. How then can we look with fear or envy upon a wretch doomed to such unhappiness?

**Verse 20.** The song ends with the refrain, *Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.* Understanding differences men from animals, but if they will not follow the highest wisdom, and like beasts find their all in this life, then their end shall be as mean and dishonourable as that of beasts slain in the chase, or killed in the shambles. From the loftiest elevation of worldly honour to the uttermost depths of death is but a step. Saddest of all is the reflection, that though men are like beasts in all the degradation of perishing, yet not in the rest which animal perishing secures, for, alas! it is written, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So ends the minstrel's lay. Comforting as the theme is to the righteous, it is full of warning to the worldly. Hear ye it, O ye rich and poor. Give ear to it, ye nations of the earth.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** Strange it is that two Psalms so near together, as this and the forty-fifth should, and should alone imitate, or be the forerunners of, two works of David's son; this—Ecclesiastes, the former—the Canticles. *J. M. Neale.*

**Verse 2.** In this Psalm David, as it were, summons and divides mankind. In the first verse he summons: "*Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.*" In the second verse he divides: *Both low and high, rich and poor, together.* The word in the Hebrew for *high* is (vya ynb), *bene ish, sons of Ish,* and the word for *low* is (Mda ynb) *bene Adam, sons of Adam.* If we should

translate the text directly, according to the letter, the words must run, *sons of men and sons of men*; for, sons of *Adam* and sons of *Ish* are both translated *sons of men*. Yet when they are set together in a way of opposition, the one signifieth *low* and the other *high*; and so our translators render it according to the sense, not sons of men and sons of men, but *low* and *high*. Junius translates to this sense, though in more words, as well they who are born of mean men, as they who are born of the honourable. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 4.** *I will incline mine ear to a parable*, i.e, I will diligently attend, that I may not sing anything ungracefully; a metaphor taken from musicians who bring their ear close to the harp, that they may ascertain the harmony of the sound. *Victorinus Bythner*.

**Verse 5.** *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* Those that are full of years are approaching the nearer to their happiness. They have finished their voyage, and now are in sight of the haven. Nature's provision is spent, her stock is exhausted, and now the good man doth not so much descend as fall into the grave, and from thence he rises to heaven and eternal bliss. And shall he be disturbed at this? shall he be afraid to be made happy? If I mistake not, this is the meaning of the psalmist's words. They are generally interpreted concerning *his ways* in general, but they seem to me to refer particularly to the calamity which his old age was incident to: for *the days of evil* are old age, and are so called by the wise man Ec 12:1; and as the *heel* is the extreme part of the body, so it is here applied to the last part of man's life, his declining age; and *iniquity* (as the word is sometimes used among the Hebrews) signifies here penal evil, and denotes the infirmities and decays of the concluding part of a man's life. So that the true meaning of the psalmist's words is this—I will not now in my last days be dejected with fear and trouble of mind, for I am coming towards my happiness, my declining years shall deliver me up to death, and that shall consign me to everlasting life. This certainly is matter of joy rather than of fear. For this reason I account my last days to be the most eligible part of my whole life. *John Edwards, D.D.* (1637-1716), in "*The Theologia Reformata*."

**Verse 5.** *Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* That is, when my sins or failings in what I have done, come to my remembrance, or are chastened upon me. Every man's heels hath some iniquity: as we shall have some dirt cleaving to our heels while we walk in a dirty world, so there is some dirt, some defilement, upon all our actions, which we may call, *the iniquity of our heel*. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 5.** *When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?* With Bishop Lowth, the celebrated Michaelis, Bishop Hare, and a host of other critics, I decidedly incline to the idea, that (ybqe), rendered "*my heels*" is to be regarded as the present participle of the verb (bqe), *to supplant, to act deceitfully, to deceive, to hold one by the heel*, etc., etc. If this be correct, then the proper translation will be:—

Wherefore should I fear in the days of adversity,  
The iniquity of my supplanters who surround me?  
The Syriac and Arabic read, as does also Dr. Kennicott:  
Why should I fear in the evil day,  
When the iniquity of my enemies compasses me about? *John Morison.*

**Verses 5-9.**

Why should I fear the evil hour,  
When ruthless foes in ambush lie,  
Who revel in their pride of power,  
And on their hoarded wealth rely?  
A brother's ransom who can pay,  
Or alter God's eternal doom?  
What hand can wrest from death his prey,  
Its banquet from the rotten tomb?

From "The Psalter, or Psalms of David, in English verse. By a *member of the University of Cambridge.*" (*Benjamin Hall Kennedy, D.D.*) 1860.

**Verse 6.** They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. Here we have the rich man trusting and boasting; surely this is a very confident trusting which issues itself into boasting! That man is ascended to the highest step of faith in God, who makes his boast of God; such faith have they in fine gold who boast in it. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 6.** They that trust in their wealth. "THE COVETOUS MAN'S SOLILOQUY." Believe me, the times are hard and dangerous; charity is grown cold, and friends uncomfortable; an empty purse is full of sorrow, and hollow bags make a heavy heart. Poverty is a civil pestilence, which frights away both friends and kindred, and leaves us to a "Lord, have mercy upon us." It is a sickness very catching and infectious, and more commonly abhorred than cured. The best antidote against it is Angelica and providence, and the best cordial is *aurum potabile*. Gold taking fasting is an approved sovereign. Debts are ill humours, and turn at last to dangerous obstructions. Lending is mere consumption of the radical humour, which, if consumed, brings a patient to nothing. Let others trust to courtiers' promises, to friends' performances, to princes' favours; give me a toy called gold, give me a thing called money. O blessed Mammon, how extremely sweet is thy all commanding presence to my thriving soul! In banishment thou art my dear companion; in captivity thou art my precious ransom; in trouble and vexation thou art my dainty rest; in sickness thou art my health; in grief my only joy; in all extremity my only trust. Virtue must veil to thee; nay, grace itself, not relished with thy sweetness, would even displease the righteous palates of the sons of men. Come, then, my soul, advise, contrive, project; go, compass sea and land; leave no exploit untried, no path untrod, no time

unspent; afford thine eyes no sleep, thy head no rest; neglect thy ravenous belly, unclothe thy back; deceive, betray, swear, and forswear, to compass such a friend. If thou be base in birth, it will make thee honourable; if weak in power, it will make thee formidable. Are thy friends few? It will make them numerous. Is thy cause bad? It will gain thee advocates. True, wisdom is an excellent help, in case it bend this way; and learning is a genteel ornament, if not too chargeable; yet, by your leave, they are but estates for the term of life: but everlasting gold, if well advantaged, will not only bless thy days, but thy surviving children from generation to generation. Come, come, let others fill their brains with dear bought wit, turn their pence into expensive charity, and store their bosoms with unprofitable piety; let them lose all to save their imaginary consciences, and beggar themselves at home to be thought honest abroad: fill thou thy bags and barns, and lay up for many years, and take thy rest.

*Francis Quarles, in "The Covetous Man's Care."*

**Verse 6.** The form of money agreeth well with the condition of it; for it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run from a man. Fire, thieves, waters, and infinite causes there are of consuming riches, and impoverishing their possessors, though they have even millions and mountains of gold; but suppose that contrary to their nature they stay by a man, yet cannot *he* stay by them, but must leave them in spite of his teeth, as the psalmist saith Ps 49:17, "The rich man shall take away nothing when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow after him." Thus death makes a violent divorce between the rich man and his goods, when it is said unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall they take away thy soul." The rich man sleeps (saith Job very elegantly), and when he openeth his eyes there is nothing. It fares with a rich man at his death, as it doth with a sleeping man when he wakes out of his dream. A man that dreams of the finding or fruition of some rich bounty is wonderful glad, yet when he awaketh he findeth nothing, but seeth it was only a dream, and he is sorry; so the rich man seemed in the time of his life, to have somewhat, but in the days of his death all vanisheth like the idea of a dream, and it vexes him. *J. D., in "The Threefold Resolution," 1608.*

**Verse 6.** Who knocks more boldly at heaven gate to be let in than they whom Christ will reject as workers of iniquity? Oh, what delusion is this! Caligula never made himself more ridiculous than when he would be honoured as a God, while he lived more like a devil. Before you would have others take you for Christians, for God's sake prove yourselves men and not beasts, as you do by your brutish lives. Talk not of your hopes of salvation so long as the marks of damnation are seen upon your flagitious lives. If the way to heaven were thus easy, I promise you the saints in all ages have been much overseen, to take so great pains in mortifying their lusts, in denying to satisfy their sensual appetite. To what purpose did they make so much waste of their sweat in their zealous serving God? and of their tears that they could serve him no better, if they might have gone to heaven as these men hope to do? That friar was far more sound in his judgment in this point, who, preaching at Rome one Lent, when some cardinals and many other great ones were present, began his sermon thus

abruptly and ironically, Saint Peter was a fool, Saint Paul was a fool, and all the primitive Christians were fools; for they thought the way to heaven was by prayers and tears, watchings and fastings, severities of mortification, and denying the pomp and glory of this world; whereas you here in Rome spend your time in balls and masks, live in pomp and pride, lust and luxury, and yet count yourselves good Christians, and hope to be saved; but at last you will prove the fools, and they will be found to have been the wise men. *William Gurnall's Funeral Sermon for Lady Mary Vere, 1671.*

**Verses 6-10.** David speaks of some *that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches*. Rich men can do great things, but here is a thing that they cannot do: *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him*. From what cannot a rich man redeem his brother? It is true of spiritual redemption; yea, that is furthest out of the rich man's reach, money will not do it: "We are not redeemed with corrupt things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God." 1Pe 1:18-19. But the psalmist speaks of a lower redemption, to which all the riches of man cannot reach: *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul* (that is, of their person from the grave), *is precious, and it ceaseth for ever*. And that he speaks of their redemption from the grave, is more clearly expressed in Ps 49:9: *That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption*. Jesus Christ did not redeem us that we should live for ever, and not see corruption. It was the privilege of Jesus Christ the Redeemer not to see corruption; but Jesus Christ hath not redeemed us that we should not see corruption. He hath redeemed us that we should live for ever in heaven, but he hath not redeemed us from corruption, that we should live for ever on earth, or not see corruption in the grave; for, as it is said in Ps 49:10 of the Psalm, we see *that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others*; as if he had said, Neither the one nor the other sort of men could make this use or improvement of their wealth, to deliver themselves from going to the grave, for if they could they would have laid all out on that purchase; but they could not do it, therefore, *they leave their wealth to others*. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 7.** *None of them can by any means redeem his brother*, etc. Some animals devoted to God could be redeemed at a price, but no price could be assigned to the ransom of a soul. That such a ransom was to be provided, the faith of the church had always anticipated: "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Ps 130:8. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

**Verse 8.** *For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever*. In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late, and as for riches, honourable titles, sceptres, and diadems, these will profit much less, and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought, not one idle word (not repented of in thy life past) shall be forgotten, for truth itself hath said, not in jest, but in earnest, of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment. Oh, how many

which now sin with great delight, yea, even with greediness (as if we served a god of wood or of stone which seeth nothing nor can do nothing) will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent. Then shall the days of thy mirth be ended, and thou shalt be overwhelmed with everlasting darkness, and instead of thy pleasures thou shalt have everlasting torments. *Thomas Tymme.*

**Verse 8.** *For it cost more to redeem their souls: so that he must let that alone forever. Prayer book Version.*

**Verse 8.** *It ceaseth for ever.* That is, wealth for ever comes short of the power necessary to accomplish this. It has always been insufficient; it always *will* be. There is no hope that it *ever* will be sufficient, that by any increase in the amount, or by any change in the conditions of the bargain, property or riches can avail for this. The whole matter is perfectly *hopeless* as to the power of wealth in saving one human being from the grave. It must always *fail* in saving a man from death. The word rendered *ceaseth*—(ldx), *khadal*, means *to leave off, to desist, to fail*. Ge 11:8 Ex 9:34 Isa 2:22. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 11.** *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever.* This is the interpretation of our actions, when we do not make God our portion, but trust in the abundance of our riches; this is our *inward thought*, the saying of our heart, Ye are my god. We do in effect say, Thou art my confidence, my hope, and my joy, and will stand by me when all things cease and fail, and wilt not suffer me to want, or to be wrong, as long as you last: these are the secret speeches of our hearts. Christians! many may (orator like), declaim against the vanity of the creature, and speak as basely of money as others do, and say, We know it is but a little refined earth; but their hearts close with it, they are loathe to part with it for God's sake, or upon God's declared will. As he that speaketh good words of God, is not said to trust in God; so speaking bad words of worldly riches doth not exempt us from trusting them. There is a difference between declaiming as an orator, and acting like a Christian. *Thomas Manton.*

**Verse 11.** *Their inward thought.* If *good* thoughts be thy *deep* thoughts, if, as we say, the best be at the bottom, thy thoughts are then right, and thou art righteous; for as the deep thoughts of worldlings are worldly thoughts, and the deep thoughts of wicked men are wicked thoughts, so the deep thoughts of good men are good thoughts. It is a notable observation of the Holy Ghost's concerning worldly men, that *their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever*, etc. Why? is there any thought that is not an *inward* thought? No, but the meaning is, though they have some floating thoughts of their mortality, and the vanity and transitoriness of all worldly things, swimming, as it were, on the top; yet they do not suffer such thoughts *to sink into their hearts*, or to go to the bottom; but the thoughts that lodge there are such as his, who is said by our Saviour to have thought within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Lu 12:19. Note the phrase, "he thought within himself." There are other kinds of thoughts that

sometimes knock at the door of the worldling's heart, nay, sometimes look in at his windows, as Paul's sermon began to press in upon Felix his heart, and to set him trembling; but there are other *thoughts within*, which if they cannot keep good thoughts quite out, they will keep them off from making any due or deep impression upon the heart. Now, these thoughts that nestle themselves as it were at the very heart roots, to keep others out from reaching thither, these *deep thoughts* are they which the Scriptures call the *inward thoughts*, according to that of the psalmist Ps 64:6, "The inward thought of every one of them and the heart, is deep." *Faithful Teat in "Right Thoughts the Righteous man's Evidence,"* 1666.

**Verse 11.** *They call their lands after their own names.* God makes fools of them, for how few have you that go beyond the third generation? How few houses have you that the child or the grandchild can say, "This was my grandfather's and my great grandfather's"? How few houses have you that those that are now in them can say, "My ancestor dwelt here, and these were his lands"? Go over a whole country, few can say so. Men when they build, together with building in the earth they build castles in the air; they have conceits. Now I build for my child, and for my child's child. God crosses them. Either they have no posterity, or by a thousand things that fall out in the world, it falls out otherwise. The time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away; that is, the buildings pass away, the owning passeth away, all things here pass away; and, therefore, buy as if you possessed not, buy, so as we neglect not the best possession in heaven, and so possess these things, as being not possessed and commanded of them. *Richard Sibbes.*

**Verse 11.** Mr. A was a wealthy farmer in Massachusetts, about sixty years of age, and it had been his ruling, and almost only passion in life to acquire property. His neighbour B owned a small farm, which came too near the centre of A's extended domain, was quite a blot in his prospect, destroyed the regularity of his lands, and on the whole it was really necessary, in his opinion, that he should add it to his other property. B became embarrassed, and was sued; judgments were obtained, and executions issued. A now thought he should obtain the land, but one execution after another was arranged, and finally the debt was paid off without selling the land. When A heard of the payment of the last execution, which put an end to his hopes of obtaining the land, he exclaimed, "Well, B is an old man, and cannot live long, and when he dies I can buy the lot." B was fifty-eight, A was sixty! Reader, do you ever expect to die? *K. Arvine's Cyclopaedia of Moral and Religious Anecdotes.*

**Verse 11.** I have purchased, saith one, such lands, and I have got so good a title to them, that certainly they will remain mine and my heirs for ever; never considering how all things here below are subject to ebbings and flowings, to turns and vicissitudes every day. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 11.** The fleeting nature of all earthly possessions is well illustrated in the life of William Beckford, and the unenduring character of gorgeous fabrics in the ruin of his famous Babel, Fonthill Abbey. Byron sang of Beckford's palace in Spain, in language most applicable to Fonthill:

"There, too, thou Vathek! England's wealthiest son—  
Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware  
When wanton wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,  
Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.  
Here didst thou dwell; here schemes of pleasure plan,  
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow.  
But now, as if a thing unblessed by man,  
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou!  
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow,  
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;  
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how  
Vain are the pleasures on earth supplied,  
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide!" C. H. S.

**Verses 11-12.** *"They call their GROUNDS after their names. But the GROUNDLING, in the midst of splendour, endureth not."* In Ps 49:11, we have (twmra), "grounds." In Ps 49:12, it is (Mra), "groundling, "with a designed iteration and play upon the word; for want of an attention to which the passage has not been fully understood. *John Mason Good.*

**Verse 12.** *Man being in honour abideth not.* The Rabbins read it thus: "Adam being in honour, lodged not one night." The Hebrew word for *abide* signifies "to stay or lodge all night." Adam, then, it seems, did not take up one night's lodging in Paradise. *Thomas Watson's Body of Divinity.*

**Verse 13.** *This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings.* Master Baxter speaks very well of this in his "Saints Everlasting Rest, "which is a very choice book. The gentry teach their children to follow pleasure, and the commonalty their children to follow profit, and young ones are ready to follow old ones. *This their way is their folly.* The very heathens condemn this, and yet Christians mind it not. Crates the philosopher said, that if possible he might, he would willingly mount to the highest place of the city, and there cry aloud in this manner, "What mean you, my masters, and whither run you headlong? carking and caring all that ever you can, to gather goods and make riches as you do, whiles in the meantime you make little or no reckoning at all of your children, unto whom you are to leave all your riches? Do not most care more for the wealth of their children's outward man, than for the health of their inward man?" *J. Votier's Survey of Effectual Calling, 1652.*

**Verse 13.** *This their way is their folly.* The folly of man seldom appears more than in being very busy about nothing, in making a great cry where there is little wool; like that empty fellow that showed himself to Alexander—having spent much time, and taken much pains at it beforehand—and boasted that he could throw a pea through a little hole, expecting a great reward; but the king gave him only a bushel of peas, for a recompense suitable to his diligent negligence, or his busy idleness. Things that

are vain and empty are unworthy of our care and industry. The man that by hard labour and hazard of his life did climb up to the top of the steeple to set an egg on end, was deservedly the object of pity and laughter. We shall think him little better than mad that should make as great a fire for the roasting of an egg as for the roasting of an ox. *George Swinnock.*

**Verse 13.** *Their folly: yet their posterity approve.* Dr. Leifchild, in his "*Remarkable Facts*," records the following incident, of a person of property, who had been accustomed regularly to attend his ministry, but who had always manifested a covetous disposition: "I was sent for to offer to him the consolation of religion as he lay upon his dying bed. What was my surprise, after having conversed and prayed with him, to find that he was unwilling to take my hand, muttering that he knew that he had not done what was right in reference to the support and furtherance of religion, but intended to amend in that respect. He then requested me to say what I thought would become of him. How could I reply, but by exhorting him to repent, and relinquishing all further thoughts of a worldly nature, to betake himself to the sacrifice and mediation of the Son of God for pardon, safety, and salvation in that world which he was to all appearance soon about to enter. He gazed at me with a look of disappointment. Upon a hint being given me to inquire into his thought at that moment, I questioned him very pointedly, and to my astonishment and horror, he reluctantly disclosed to me the fact that while thus seemingly about to breathe his last, his hands were under the bed clothes grasping the keys of his cabinet and treasures, lest they should be taken from him! Soon after he departed this life, and there was, alas! reason to fear that, together with his property, he had transmitted somewhat of his fatal passion to those who survived him. It was distressing to me to reflect that a hearer of mine should quit this world with his fingers stiffened in death around the keys of his treasures. How strong, how terrible, was the ruling passion in the death of this man!"

**Verse 14.** *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling,* or as we put in the margin, *The grave being an habitation to every one of them, shall consume their beauty.* Some may object, Is not this true of godly men too? are not they thus handled by death and the grave? doth not death feed on them? and doth not the grave consume their beauty? I answer, Though it doth, yet it hath not to feed upon, nor consume them, as it feeds upon and consumes wicked men. For the psalmist speaks here of death as it were triumphing over the wicked, whereas the godly triumph over death. For, first, he saith, The wicked are *laid in the grave like sheep*: they lived like *wolves* or *lions*, but they are laid in the grave like *sheep*. If it be asked, *Why like sheep?* I answer, not for the innocency of their lives, but for their impotency in death; as if it had been said, when once death took them in hand to lay them in the grave, they could make no more resistance than a sheep can against a lion or a wolf. And when death hath thus laid them in the grave, then secondly, saith the psalmist, *Death shall feed on them*, as a lion doth upon a sheep, or any wild beast

upon his prey, which is a further degree of death's triumph over the wicked. And, thirdly, *Their beauty shall consume in the grave*, that is, all their bodily and natural beauty (and this is all the beauty which they have) shall consume in the grave, whereas the godly have a beauty (and they count it their only beauty) which the grave cannot consume, and that is the beauty of their graces, the beauty of holiness, the spiritual beauty of the inner man, yea, and the spiritual beauty of their outward holy actings shall not consume in the grave; for, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Re 19:13. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 14.** *Death shall feed on them: rather, Death shall be their shepherd.* (Sept.) At the end of the foregoing Psalm, the psalmist had said in the name of his people, that, "God is our God, for ever and ever; he will lead us as a shepherd over death, "and here he takes up the same pastoral figure, and contrasts with their case the case of the proud and prosperous worldly men, who trust in their earthly riches and power. *They will not* be led in safety, under the pastoral care of God, *over death*. No; *death* itself will be *their* Shepherd, and the grave will be their sheepfold; where they will be laid together like sheep in a pen. As Augustine says, "Death is the shepherd of the infidel. Life (*i.e.*, Christ) is the Shepherd of the faithful." "*In inferno sunt oves quibus pastor Mors est; in caelo sunt oves quibus pastor Vita est.*" And so Keble

Even as a flock arrayed are they  
For the dark grave; Death guides their way,  
Death is their Shepherd now.

—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 14.** *In the morning*, that is, saith Dathe, in the *time of judgment*. He thinks there is here an allusion to the usual time of holding courts of justice, which was in the morning. See Ps 73:14 101:8 Jer 21:12. *Editorial note to Calvin in loc.*

**Verse 14.** *Their beauty shall consume in the grave*, And now if we do but consider a little of the tombs and sepulchres of princes and noblemen, whose glory and majesty we have seen when they lived here on earth, and do behold the horrible forms and shapes which they now have, shall we not cry out as men amazed, Is this that glory? Is this that highness and excellency? Whither now are the degrees of their waiting servants gone? Where are their ornaments and jewels? Where is their pomp, their delicacy and niceness? All these things are vanished away like the smoke, and there is now nothing left but dust, horror, and stink. The soul being dissolved, there lieth upon the ground not a human body, but a dead carcass without life, without sense, without strength, and so fearful to look upon, that the sight thereof may hardly be endured. To be sure, it is a little better (as touching the substance) than the body of a horse, or a dog, which lieth dead in the fields, and all that pass by stop their noses and make haste away, that they be not annoyed with the sight and stink thereof. Such is

man's body now become; yea, and though it were the body of a monarch, emperor, or a king. Where is that majesty, that excellency, that authority which he had aforetime when all men trembled to behold it, and might not come in presence thereof without all reverence and obeisance? what are all those things become? were they a dream or shadow? After those things the funeral is prepared, the which is all that men can carry with them, of all their riches and kingdom, and this also they should not have, if in their lifetime they did not appoint it for their dignity and honour. For the prophet David saith truly Ps 49:16, *"Be not thou afraid though one be made rich, or, if the glory of his house be increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, neither shall his pomp follow him."*

*Thomas Tymme.*

**Verse 14.** When we look to a charnel-house, and take a view of the grave, what amazing and dismal scenes present themselves! How many great and important images appear! Distracting horrors strike our imagination, and hideous sounds of diseases, destruction, and death, with all their woeful and black train, terrify us. Ah! the melancholy confused heap of the ruins of mankind, what a terrible carnage is made of the human race! and what a solemn and awful theatre of mortality, covered with the disordered remains of our fellow creatures, presents itself to our minds! There lie the bones of a proud monarch, who fancied himself a little god, mingled with the ashes of his poorest subjects! Death seized him in the height of his vanity, he was just returning from a conquest, and his haughty mind was swelled with his power and greatness, when one of these fatal arrows pierced his heart, and at once finished all his perishing thoughts and contrivances, then the dream of glory vanished, and all his empire was confined to the grave. Look how pale that victorious general appears, how dead, and cold, and lifeless these arms that were once accustomed to war; see if you can discern any difference betwixt his dust and that of the most despicable slave. Yonder, a numerous army, once fierce and resolute, whose conquests were rapid as lightning, and made all the nations to shake for fear of them, are now so weak that they lie a prey, exposed to the meanest animals, the loathsome worms, who crawl in triumph over them, and insult their decayed ruins. There is a body that was so much doted on, and solicitously cared for, and the beauty and shape whereof were so foolishly admired, now noisome and rotten, nothing but vermin are now fond of it, so affecting a change hath death made upon it. Look, next to this, upon the inglorious ashes of a rich, covetous wretch, whose soul was glued to this world, and hugged itself in its treasures; with what mighty throes and convulsions did death tear him from this earth! How did his hands cling to his gold! with what vehement desires did he fasten on his silver, all of them weak and fruitless! Look now if riches saved him in that day, if you can perceive any of his useless treasures lying beside him in the grave, or if the glory of his house have descended after him! Yonder, an ambitious statesman, his rotten bones are scarce to be discerned: how did he applaud his artful schemes! how securely did he think them laid, and flattered himself with the hopes of an established greatness! but death stepped in, blew them all

up at once; this grave is the whole result of his counsels. And lo, there, what horrid and suffocating stink ascends from these many hellish sacrifices of lust and impurity, who wasted their strength in debauch, and carried down with them nothing but the shame of beastly pleasures to the grave. But there is no end to the corpses, nor can we survey this terrible field of death's conquests. *William Dunlop.*

**Verse 15.** (*last clause*). *For he shall take me.* This short half verse is, as Bottcher remarks, the more weighty, from its very shortness. The same expression occurs again, Ps 73:24, "Thou shalt take me," the original of both being Ge 5:24, where it is used of the translation of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 17.** *For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away.* The form of money agrees well with the condition of it; it is stamped round, because it is so apt to run away. Could we be rich so long as we live, yet that were uncertain enough for life itself is but a dream, a shadow, but a dream of a shadow. (Augustine.) Rich men are but like hailstones; they make a noise in the world, as the other rattle on the tiles of a house; down they fall, lie still, and melt away. So that if riches could stay by a man, yet he cannot stay by them. Spite of his teeth, *he shall carry away nothing when he dies.* Life and goods are both in a vessel, both cast away at once; yea, of the two, life hath the more likelihood of continuance. Let it fly never so fast away, riches have eagles' wings, and will outfly it. There be thieves in the highways, that will take our moneys and spare our lives. In our penal laws, there be not so many ways to forfeit our lives as our goods. Rich Job lived to see himself poor to a proverb. How many in this city reputed rich, yet have broken for thousands! There are innumerable ways to be poor; a fire, a thief, a false servant, suretyship, trusting of bad customers, an unfaithful factor, a pirate, an unskilful pilot, hath brought rich men to poverty. One gale of wind is able to make merchants rich or beggars. Man's life is like the banks of a river, his temporal estate is the stream: time will moulder away the banks, but the stream stays not for that, it glides away continually. Life is the tree, riches are the fruit, or rather the leaves; the leaves will fall, the fruit is plucked, and yet the tree stands. Some write of the pine tree, that if the bark be pulled off, it lasts long; being on it rots. If the worldling's bark were stripped off, he might perhaps live the longer, there is great hope he would live the better. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 17.** *He shall carry nothing away.* It is with us in this world, as it was in the Jewish fields and vineyards: *pluck and eat* they might what they would while they were there; but they might not pocket or put up ought to carry with them. De 23:24. *Thomas Gataker.*

**Verse 17.** *He shall carry nothing away.* "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." Job 20:15.

**Verse 17.** *Descend.* Death takes the sinner by the throat, and "hauls him down stairs to the grave." The indulgence in any sinful propensity has this downward, deathly tendency. Every lust, whether for

riches or honours, for gambling, wine or women, leads the deluded wretched votary step by step to the chambers of death. There is no hope in the dread prospect; trouble and anguish possess the spirit. Hast thou escaped, O my soul, from the net of the infernal fowler? Never forget that it is as a brand *snatched* from the burning. Oh, to grace how great a debtor! *George Offor's note in "The Works of John Bunyan."*

**Verse 17.** You will carry none of your riches, fool, to the waters of Acheron. You will be ferried over quite naked in the infernal boat. —*Propertius*.

**Verse 18.** How foolish is it to account thyself a better man than another, only because thy dunghill is a little bigger than his! These things are not at all to be reckoned into the value and worth of a man; they are all without thee, and concern thee no more than fine clothes do the health or strength of the body. It is wealth, indeed, that makes all the noise and bustle in the world, and challengeth all the respect and honour to itself; and the ignorant vulgar, whose eyes are dazzled with pomp and bravery, pay it with a stupid and astonished reverence. Yet know, that it is but thy silks and velvet, thy lands, or thy retinue and servants, they venerate, not thee: and if thou thinkest otherwise, thou art as justly ridiculous as that ass in the apologue, that grew very gravely proud, and took state, when the people fell prostrate before him, adoring, not him, but to the idol he carried. *Ezekiel Hopkins*.

**Verse 20.** *Like the beasts that perish.* My lords, it is no wonder at all, if men that affect beastly pleasures, and dote upon perishing honours, become *like the beasts that perish*. It is no miracle if he that lives like a beast dies like a beast. Take a man that hath lived like the fool in the gospel, and tell me, what hath this man done for his immortal soul more than a beast doth for its perishing soul? Soul, soul, cease from care, eat, drink, and take thine ease; this is the constant ditty of most men in honour: they have studied clothes and victuals, titles and offices, ways of gain and pleasure. Am I not yet at highest? They have, it may be, studied the black art of flattery and treachery; they understand the humour of the times, the compliances and dependences of this and other statesman, the projects of divers princes abroad, and the main design here at home. Is this all? Why, then be it known unto you, that the men of this strain have made no better provision for their precious souls, than if they had the soul, the vanishing soul of a beast within them; and certainly, if we were to judge of the substance of men's souls by their unworthy and sensual conversation, we might easily fall into that heresy, that dangerous dream of some who conceive that their souls are mortal. *Francis Cheynell, in a Sermon entitled, "The Man of Honour, "... preached before the Lords of Parliament, 1645.*

**Verse 20.** *Like the beasts that perish.* Sin is both *formaliter* and *effective* vile. As it is so in itself, so it has made man vile. No creature so debased as man, being in this respect become viler than any creature. There is no such depravation in the nature of any creature, except in the diabolical nature. No creature ever razed God's image out of its nature, but only man. There is no aversions to the will of God, no inclination to what offends him, in any creature on earth but man. Man, then, who was

once the glory of the creation, is become the vilest of all creatures, for that is vilest which is most contrary to the infinite glory, but so is our nature, "Man being in honour, abideth not, "is now *like the beast that perish*; nay, worse than they, if the greatest evil can make him worse. Man was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory, advanced to be lord and governor of all the works of his hands; and all creatures in this world were put under his feet. Ps 8:5-6. But by this natural corruption he that was but a little lower than the angels is now something below the beasts. He was to have dominion, but is made baser than those over whom he rules. They were put under his feet, but now he is as low as they. This is the sad issue of natural corruption. *David Clarkson*.

**Verse 20.** *Like the beasts.* Man is so much a beast, that he cannot know himself to be one till God teach him. And we never learn to be men till we have learned that we were beasts...It is not said he is like this or that beast, but *he is like the beasts that perish*. Take any beast, or all beasts, the worst of beasts, he is the picture of them all, and he daily exemplifies the vilest of their qualities in his own. *Joseph Caryl*.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 2.**

1. The common needs of rich and poor men.
2. The common privileges of rich and poor saints.
3. Their common service.
4. Their common heaven.

**Verse 3.** The deep things of God are intended,

1. To exercise our minds to understand them.
2. To try our faith by believing them—"incline" implies a submissive mind.
3. To excite our joy as we grasp them—"upon the harp."
4. To employ our faculties in explaining them to others.

**Verse 5.**

1. The effects of our sin remain—(a) In ourselves, (b) In others.
2. In a time of conviction they *compass us about*: better to do so in this life, than to haunt us as ghosts for ever.
3. When they are pardoned we have nothing to fear. *G.R.*

**Verse 7.**

1. *Implied*. The soul needs redeeming.
2. *Denied*. Wealth, power, learning, none can redeem.
3. *Supplied*—a ransom by Jesus.
4. *Applied*—by the Spirit to our actual deliverance.

**Verse 12.** (*last clause*). Wherein the ungodly are like beasts, and wherein different.

**Verse 12.** Here is a twofold thwarting or crossing of the purposes of the ungodly worldling.

1. The first is, *he shall not be that which he ever wished to be*: he shall not continue in honour.
2. The other is this, *he shall be that which he never desired to be*: he shall be like the beasts that die. He shall miss of that which he sought for, and he shall have that which he looked not for. —S. Hieron.

**Verse 13.**

1. In secular things men imitate the *wisdom* of others.
2. In spiritual things they imitate *their folly*. G. R.

**Verse 14.**

1. In proportion to the prosperity of the ungodly here, will be their misery hereafter: as sheep from the fat pasture led to the slaughterhouse.
2. In proportion to the luxury here, will be their corruption hereafter—*Death shall feed on them*: they have become well fed for death to feed on them.
3. In proportion to their dignity here, will be their degradation hereafter—*The upright shall have*, etc. Oh, what a contrast between the rich man and Lazarus then!
4. In proportion to their beauty here, will be their deformity hereafter. "Art thou become like one of us?" G. R.

**Verse 14.** Sheep, how far they image the wicked.

**Verse 14.** *In the morning*. See the various Biblical prophecies of what will happen "in the morning."

**Verse 15.**

1. *Return* to the dust I shall.
2. *Redeem* from the dust he will.
3. *Receive* into heaven he will.
4. *Rejoice* for ever I shall.

**Verse 17.** The loaded and unloaded sinner.

**Verse 20.**

1. Men of spiritual understanding without worldly honour are higher than the angels of God in heaven.
2. Men in worldly honour without the true wisdom are worse than the beasts that perish. G. R.

**Psalm 50**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

**TITLE.** A Psalm of Asaph. This is the first of the Psalms of Asaph, but whether the production of that eminent musician, or merely dedicated to him, we cannot tell. The titles of twelve Psalms bear his name, but it could not in all of them be meant to ascribe their authorship to him, for several of these Psalms are of too late a date to have been composed by the same writer as the others. There was an Asaph in David's time, who was one of David's chief musicians, and his family appear to have continued long after in their hereditary office of temple musicians. An Asaph is mentioned as a recorder or secretary in the days of Hezekiah 2Ki 18:18, and another was keeper of the royal forests under Artaxerxes. That Asaph did most certainly write some of the Psalms is clear from 2Ch 29:30, where it is recorded that the Levites were commanded to "sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," but that other Asaphic Psalms were not of his composition, but were only committed to his care as a musician, is equally certain from 1Ch 16:7, where David is said to have delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. It matters little to us whether he wrote or sang, for poet and musician are near akin, and if one composes words and another sets them to music, they rejoice together before the Lord.

**DIVISION.** The Lord is represented as summoning the whole earth to hear his declaration, Ps 50:1-6; he then declares the nature of the worship which he accepts, Ps 50:7-15, accuses the ungodly of breaches of the precepts of the second table, Ps 50:16-21, and closes the court with a word of threatening, Ps 50:22, and a direction of grace, Ps 50:23.

#### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *The mighty God, even the Lord.* El, Elohim, Jehovah, three glorious names for the God of Israel. To render the address the more impressive, these august titles are mentioned, just as in royal decrees the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration and as the self-existent One. *Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof.* The dominion of Jehovah extends over the whole earth, and therefore to all mankind is his decree directed. The east and the west are bidden to hear the God who makes his sun to rise on every quarter of the globe. Shall the summons of the great King be despised? Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call?

**Verse 2.** *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.* The Lord is represented not only as speaking to the earth, but as coming forth to reveal the glory of his presence to an assembled universe. God of old dwelt in Zion among his chosen people, but here the beams of his splendour are described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was spoken of in the first verse, but here is a far brighter sun. The majesty of God is most conspicuous among his own elect, but is not confined to them; the church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick. God shines not only in Zion, but out of her.

She is made perfect in beauty by his indwelling, and that beauty is seen by all observers when the Lord shines forth from her. Observe how with trumpet voice and flaming ensign the infinite Jehovah summons the heavens and the earth to hearken to his word.

**Verse 3.** *Our God shall come.* The psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. "He comes, "they say, "our covenant God is coming; "they can hear his voice from afar, and perceive the splendour of his attending train. Even thus should we await the long promised appearing of the Lord from heaven. *And shall not keep silence.* He comes to speak, to plead with his people, to accuse and judge the ungodly. He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent is expected to reveal himself! What will be the reverent joy and solemn expectation when the poetic scene of this Psalm becomes in the last great day an actual reality! *A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.* Flame and hurricane are frequently described as the attendants of the divine appearance. "Our God is a consuming fire." "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire." Ps 18:12. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2Th 1:7-8. Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power. Who will not listen in solemn silence when such is the tribunal from which the judge pleads with heaven and earth?

**Verse 4.** *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.* Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solemnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say "Amen" to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly? *That he may judge his people.* Judgment begins at the house of God. The trial of the visible people of God will be a most awful ceremonial. He will thoroughly purge his floor. He will discern between his nominal and his real people, and that in open court, the whole universe looking on. My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?

**Verse 5.** *Gather my saints together unto me.* Go, ye swift winged messengers, and separate the precious from the vile. Gather out the wheat of the heavenly garner. Let the long scattered, but elect people, known by my separating grace to be my sanctified ones, be now assembled in one place. All are not saints who seem to be so—a severance must be made; therefore let all who profess to be saints be gathered before my throne of judgment, and let them hear the word which will search and

try the whole, that the false may be convicted and the true revealed. *Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*; this is the grand test, and yet some have dared to imitate it. The covenant was ratified by the slaying of victims, the cutting and dividing of offerings; this the righteous have done by accepting with true faith the great propitiatory sacrifice, and this the pretenders have done in merely outward form. Let them be gathered before the throne for trial and testing, and as many as have really ratified the covenant by faith in the Lord Jesus shall be attested before all worlds as the objects of distinguishing grace, while formalists shall learn that outward sacrifices are all in vain. Oh, solemn assize, how does my soul bow in awe at the prospect thereof!

**Verse 6.** *And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.* Celestial intelligences and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infallible judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false. *For God is judge himself.* This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of later times, were readily deceived, but not so the all discerning Lord. No deputy judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward. The scene in the Psalm is a grand poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern between him that feareth and him that feareth him not. *Selah.* Here we may well pause in reverent prostration, in deep searching of heart, in humble prayer, and in awe struck expectation.

**Verses 7-15.** The address which follows is directed to the professed people of God. It is clearly, in the first place, meant for Israel; but is equally applicable to the visible church of God in every age. It declares the futility of external worship when spiritual faith is absent, and the mere outward ceremonial is rested in.

**Verse 7.** *Hear, O my people, and I will speak.* Because Jehovah speaks and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak," saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge. *O Israel, and I will testify against thee.* Their covenant name is mentioned to give point to the address; it was a double evil that the chosen nation should become so carnal, so unspiritual, so false, so heartless to their God. God himself, whose eyes sleep not, who is not misled by rumour, but sees for himself, enters on the scene as witness against his favoured nation. Alas! for us when God, even our fathers' God, testifies to the hypocrisy of the visible church. *I am God, even thy God.* He had taken them to be his peculiar people above all other nations, and they had in the most solemn manner avowed that he was their God. Hence the special reason for calling them to account. The law began with, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but *thy* God, O Israel; this is that makes thee so amenable to his searching reproofs.

**Verse 8.** *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been ever before me.*

Though they had not failed in maintaining his outward worship, or even if they had, he was not about to call them to account for this: a more weighty matter was now under consideration. They thought the daily sacrifices and the abounding burnt offerings to be everything: he counted them nothing if the inner sacrifice of heart devotion had been neglected. What was greatest with them was least with God. It is even so today. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are their main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the external be maintained by all means, according to the divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord.

**Verse 9.** *I will take no bullock out of thy house.* Foolishly they dreamed that bullocks with horns and hoofs could please the Lord, when indeed he sought for hearts and souls. Impiously they fancied that Jehovah needed these supplies, and that if they fed his altar with their fat beasts, he would be content. What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence. They remembered not that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." *Nor he goats out of thy folds.* He mentions these lesser victims as if to rouse their common sense to see that the great Creator could find not satisfaction in mere animal offerings. If he needed these, he would not appeal to their scanty stalls and folds; in fact, he here refuses to take so much as one, if they brought them under the false and dishonouring view, that they were in themselves pleasing to him. This shows that the sacrifices of the law were symbolical of higher and spiritual things, and were not pleasing to God except under their typical aspect. The believing worshipper looking beyond the outward was accepted, the unspiritual who had no respect to their meaning was wasting his substance, and blaspheming the God of heaven.

**Verse 10.** *For every beast of the forest is mine.* How could they imagine that the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, had need of beasts, when all the countless hordes that find shelter in a thousand forests and wildernesses belong to him? *And the cattle upon a thousand hills.* Not alone the wild beasts, but also the tamer creatures are all his own. Even if God cared for these things, he could supply himself. Their cattle were not, after all, their own, but were still the great Creator's property, why then should he be beholden to them. From Dan to Beersheba, from Nebaioth to Lebanon, there fed not a beast which was not marked with the name of the great Shepherd; why, then, should he crave oblations of Israel? What a slight is here put even upon sacrifices of divine appointment when wrongly viewed as in themselves pleasing to God! And all this to be so expressly stated under the law! How much more is this clear under the gospel, when it is so much more plainly revealed, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"? Ye Ritualists, ye Sacramentarians, ye modern Pharisees, what say ye to this?

**Verse 11.** *I know all the fowls of the mountain.* All the winged creatures are under my inspection and near my hand; what then can be the value of your pairs of turtledoves, and your two young pigeons? The great Lord not only feeds all his creatures, but is well acquainted with each one; how wondrous is this knowledge! *And the wild beasts of the fields are mine.* The whole population moving over the plain belongs to me; why then should I seek you beeves and rams? In me all things live and move; how mad are you to suppose that I desire your living things! A spiritual God demands other life than that which is seen in animals; he looks for spiritual sacrifice; for the love, the trust, the praise, the life of your hearts.

**Verse 12.** *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.* Strange conception, a hungry God! Yet if such an absurd ideal could be truth, and if the Lord hungered for meat, he would not ask it of men. He could provide for himself out of his own possessions; he would not turn suppliant to his own creatures. Even under the grossest ideal of God, faith in outward ceremonies is ridiculous. Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what! *For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.* What can he need who is owner of all things and able to create as he wills? Thus overwhelmingly does the Lord pour forth his arguments upon formalists.

**Verse 13.** *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Are you so infatuated as to think this? Is the great I AM subject to corporeal wants, and are they to be thus grossly satisfied? Heathens thought thus of their idols, but dare ye think thus of the God who made the heavens and the earth? Can ye have fallen so low as to think thus of me, O Israel? What vivid reasoning is here! How the fire flashes dart into the idiot faces of trusters in outward forms! Ye dupes of Rome, can ye read this and be unmoved? The expostulation is indignant; the questions utterly confound; the conclusion is inevitable; heart worship only can be acceptable with the true God. It is inconceivable that outward things can gratify him, except so far as through them our faith and love express themselves.

**Verse 14.** *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your poor souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me. The sacrifices, as considered in themselves, are contemned, but the internal emotions of love consequent upon a remembrance of divine goodness, are commended as the substance, meaning, and soul of sacrifice. Even when the legal ceremonials were not abolished, this was true, and when they came to an end, this truth was more than ever made manifest. Not for want of bullocks on the altar was Israel blamed, but for want of thankful adoration before the Lord. She excelled in the visible, but in the inward grace, which is the one thing needful, she sadly failed. Too many in these days are in the same condemnation. *And pay*

*thy vows unto the most High.* Let the sacrifice be really presented to the God who seeth the heart, pay to him the love you promised, the service you covenanted to render, the loyalty of heart you have vowed to maintain. O for grace to do this! O that we may be graciously enabled to love God, and live up to our profession! To be, indeed, the servants of the Lord, the lovers of Jesus, this is our main concern. What avails our baptism, to what end our gatherings at the Lord's table, to what purpose our solemn assemblies, if we have not the fear of the Lord, and vital godliness reigning within our bosoms?

**Verse 15.** *And call upon me in the day of trouble.* Oh blessed verse! Is this then true sacrifice? Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so. The King himself so regards it. For herein is faith manifested, herein is love proved, for in the hour of peril we fly to those we love. It seems a small thing to pray to God when we are distressed, yet is it a more acceptable worship than the mere heartless presentation of bullocks and he goats. This is a voice from the throne, and how full of mercy it is! It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain drop from the bosom of the storm! Who would not offer such sacrifices? Troubled one, haste to present it now! Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathes like frankincense all around this holy Psalm. *I will deliver thee.* The reality of thy sacrifice of prayer shall be seen in its answer. Whether the smoke of burning bulls be sweet to me or no, certainly thy humble prayer shall be, and I will prove it so by my gracious reply to thy supplication. This promise is very large, and may refer both to temporal and eternal deliverances; faith can turn it every way, like the sword of the cherubim. *And thou shalt glorify me.* Thy prayer will honour me, and thy grateful perception of my answering mercy will also glorify me. The goats and bullocks would prove a failure, but the true sacrifice never could. The calves of the stall might be a vain oblation, but not the calves of sincere lips. Thus we see what is true ritual. Here we read inspired rubrics. Spiritual worship is the great, the essential matter; all else without it is rather provoking than pleasing to God. As helps to the soul, outward offerings were precious, but when men went not beyond them, even their hallowed things were profaned in the view of heaven.

**Verses 16-21.** Here the Lord turns to the manifestly wicked among his people; and such there were even in the highest places of his sanctuary. If moral formalists had been rebuked, how much more these immoral pretenders to fellowship with heaven? If the lack of heart spoiled the worship of the more decent and virtuous, how much more would violations of the law, committed with a high hand, corrupt the sacrifices of the wicked?

**Verse 16.** *But unto the wicked God saith.* To the breakers of the second table he now addresses himself; he had previously spoken to the neglectors of the first. *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?* You violate openly my moral law, and yet are great sticklers for my ceremonial commands! What have you to do with them? What interest can you have in them? Do you dare to teach my law to

others, and profane it yourselves? What impudence, what blasphemy is this! Even if you claim to be sons of Levi, what of that? Your wickedness disqualifies you, disinherits you, puts you out of the succession. It should silence you, and would if my people were as spiritual as I would have them, for they would refuse to hear you, and to pay you the portion of temporal things which is due to my true servants. You count up your holy days, you contend for rituals, you fight for externals, and yet the weightier matters of the law ye despise! Ye blind guides, ye strain out gnats and swallow camels; your hypocrisy is written on your foreheads and manifest to all. *Or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth.* Ye talk of being in covenant with me, and yet trample my holiness beneath you feet as swine trample upon pearls; think ye that I can brook this? Your mouths are full of lying and slander, and yet ye mouth my words as if they were fit morsels for such as you! How horrible and evil it is, that to this day we see men explaining doctrines who despise precepts! They make grace a coverlet for sin, and even judge themselves to be sound in the faith, while they are rotten in life. We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ.

**Verse 17.** *Seeing thou hatest instruction.* Profane professors are often too wise to learn, too besotted with conceit to be taught of God. What a monstrosity that men should declare those statutes which with their hearts they do not know, and which in their lives they openly disavow! Woe unto the men who hate the instruction which they take upon themselves to give. *And castest my words behind thee.* Despising them, throwing them away as worthless, putting them out of sight as obnoxious. Many boasters of the law did this practically; and in these last days there are pickers and choosers of God's words who cannot endure the practical part of Scripture; they are disgusted at duty, they abhor responsibility, they disembowel texts of their plain meanings, they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. It is an ill sign when a man dares not look a Scripture in the face, and an evidence of brazen impudence when he tries to make it mean something less condemnatory of his sins, and endeavours to prove it to be less sweeping in its demands. How powerful is the argument that such men have no right to take the covenant of God into their mouths, seeing that its spirit does not regulate their lives!

**Verse 18.** *When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.* Moral honesty cannot be absent where true grace is present. Those who excuse others in trickery are guilty themselves; those who use others to do unjust actions for them are doubly so. If a man be ever so religious, if his own actions do not rebuke dishonesty, he is an accomplice with thieves. If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie. *And hast been partaker with adulterers.* One by one the moral precepts are thus broken by the sinners in Zion. Under the cloak of piety, unclean livers conceal themselves. We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behaviour in our presence; and if we

thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name? See how the Lord lays righteousness to the plummet. How plainly all this declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! No amount of ceremonial or theological accuracy can cover dishonesty and fornication: these filthy things must be either purged from us by the blood of Jesus, or they will kindle a fire in God's anger which will burn even to the lowest hell.

**Verse 19.** *Thou givest thy mouth to evil.* Sins against the ninth commandment are here mentioned. The man who surrenders himself to the habit of slander is a vile hypocrite if he associates himself with the people of God. A man's health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander almost as often as they breathe, and yet are great upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness. To what depths will not they go in evil, who delight in spreading it with their tongues? *And thy tongue frameth deceit.* This is a more deliberate sort of slander, where the man dexterously elaborates false witness, and concocts methods of defamation. There is an ingenuity of calumny in some men, and, alas! even in some who are thought to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They manufacture falsehoods, weave them in their loom, hammer them on their anvil, and then retail their wares in every company. Are these accepted with God? Though they bring their wealth to the altar, and speak eloquently of truth and of salvation, have they any favour with God? We should blaspheme the holy God if we were to think so. They are corrupt in his sight, a stench in his nostrils. He will cast all liars into hell. Let them preach, and pray, and sacrifice as they will; till they become truthful, the God of truth loathes them utterly.

**Verse 20.** *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother.* He sits down to it, makes it his meat, studies it, resolves upon it, becomes a master of defamation, occupies the chair of calumny. His nearest friend is not safe, his dearest relative escapes not. *Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.* He ought to love him best, but he has an ill word for him. The son of one's own mother was to the Oriental a very tender relation; but the wretched slanderer knows no claims of kindred. He stabs his brother in the dark, and aims a blow at him who came forth of the same womb; yet he wraps himself in the robe of hypocrisy, and dreams that he is a favourite of heaven, an accepted worshipper of the Lord. Are such monsters to be met with nowadays? Alas! they pollute our churches still, and are roots of bitterness, spots on our solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Perhaps some such may read these lines, but they will probably read them in vain; their eyes are too dim to see their own condition, their hearts are waxen gross, their ears are dull of hearing; they are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned.

**Verse 21.** *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.* No swift judgment overthrew the sinner—longsuffering reigned; no thunder was heard in threatening, and no bolt of fire was hurled in execution. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* The inference drawn from the Lord's patience was infamous; the respited culprit thought his judge to be one of the same order

as himself. He offered sacrifice, and deemed it accepted; he continued in sin, and remained unpunished, and therefore he rudely said, "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar." What will not men imagine of the Lord? At one time they liken the glory of Israel to a calf, and anon unto their brutish selves. *But I will reprove thee.* At last I will break silence and let them know my mind. *And set them in order before thine eyes.* I will marshall thy sins in battle array. I will make thee see them, I will put them down item by item, classified and arranged. Thou shalt know that if silent awhile, I was never blind or deaf. I will make thee perceive what thou hast tried to deny. I will leave the seat of mercy for the throne of judgment, and there I will let thee see how great the difference between thee and me.

**Verse 22.** *Now or oh!* it is a word of entreaty, for the Lord is loath even to let the most ungodly run on to destruction. *Consider this;* take these truths to heart, ye who trust in ceremonies and ye who live in vice, for both of you sin in that *ye forget God.* Bethink you how unaccepted you are, and turn unto the Lord. See how you have mocked the eternal, and repent of your iniquities. *Lest I tear you in pieces,* as the lion rends his prey, *and there be none to deliver,* no Saviour, no refuge, no hope. Ye reject the Mediator: beware, for ye will sorely need one in the day of wrath, and none will be near to plead for you. How terrible, how complete, how painful, how humiliating, will be the destruction of the wicked! God uses no soft words, or velvet metaphors, nor may his servants do so when they speak of the wrath to come. O reader, consider this.

**Verse 23.** *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. Not the lowing of bullocks bound to the altar, but the songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honoured thereby. *And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.* Holy living is a choice evidence of salvation. He who submits his whole way to divine guidance, and is careful to honour God in his life, brings an offering which the Lord accepts through his dear Son; and such a one shall be more and more instructed, and made experimentally to know the Lord's salvation. He needs salvation, for the best ordering of the life cannot save us, but *that salvation* he shall have. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives. O Lord, give us to stand in the judgment with those who have worshipped thee aright and have seen thy salvation.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** The exordium or beginning of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker GOD, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented to us with any human resemblance; nor do I imagine that earth

will ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them. *Barton Bouchier.*

**Verse 1.** *El, Elohim, Jehovah has spoken!* So reads the Hebrew. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 1.** (*first clause*). Some have observed that these three names, *El, Elohim, Jehovah*, here mentioned, have three very distinct accents set to them, and which being joined to a verb singular (*dbd*), *hath spoken*, contains the mystery of the trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine Essence. *John Gill.*

**Verse 1.** *And called the earth, etc., i.e., all the inhabitants of the earth* he has commanded to come as witnesses and spectators of the judgment. *Simon de Muis.*

**Verses 1-5.**

No more shall atheists mock his long delay;  
His vengeance sleeps no more; behold the day!  
Behold!—the Judge descends; his guards are nigh,  
Tempests and fire attend him down the sky.  
When God appears, all nature shall adore him.  
While sinners tremble, saints rejoice before him.  
Heaven, earth and hell, draw near; let all things come,  
To hear my justice, and the sinner's doom;  
But gather first my saints (the Judge commands),  
Bring them, ye angels, from their distant lands.  
When Christ returns, wake every cheerful passion,  
And shout, ye saints; he comes for your salvation.

—*Isaac Watts.*

**Verse 5.** *Gather, etc.* To whom are these words addressed? Many suppose to the angels, as the ministers of God's will; but it is unnecessary to make the expression more definite than it is in the Psalm. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 5.** *My saints*, the objects of my mercy, those whom I have called and specially distinguished. The term is here descriptive of a relation, not of an intrinsic quality. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 5.** *Gather my saints together unto me.* There is a double or twofold gathering to Christ. There is a gathering unto Christ by faith, a gathering within the bond of the covenant, a gathering into the family of God, a gathering unto the root of Jesse, standing up for an ensign of the people. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Isa 11:10. This is the main end of the gospel, the great work of

ministers, the gathering of sinners unto Christ. But then there is a gathering at the general judgment; and this is the fathering that is here spoken of. This gathering is consequential to the other. Christ will gather none to him at the last day but those that are gathered to him by faith here; he will give orders to gather together unto him all these, and none but these, that have taken hold of his covenant.

I would speak of Christ's owning and acknowledging the saints at his second coming. His owning and acknowledging them is imported in his giving these orders: *Gather my saints together unto me.* ...

Now upon this head I mention the things following:—1. Saintship will be the only mark of distinction in that day. There are many marks of distinction now; but these will all cease, and this only will remain.

2. Saintship will then be Christ's badge of honour. Beware of mocking at saintship, or sanctity, holiness and purity; for it is Christ's badge of honour, the garments with which his followers are clothed, and will be the only badge of honour at the great day. 3. Christ will forget and mistake none

of the saints. Many of the saints are forgotten here, it is forgotten that such persons were in the world, but Christ will forget and mistake none of them at the great day; he will give forth a list of all his saints, and give orders to gather them all unto him. 4. He will confess, own, and acknowledge them before

his Father, and his holy angels. Mt 10:32 Lu 12:8 Re 3:5. They are to go to my Father's house, and they are to go thither in my name, in my right, and at my back; and so it is necessary I should own and acknowledge them before my Father. But what need is there for his owning them before the

angels? *Answer.* They are to be the angel's companions, and so it is necessary he should own them before the angels. This will be like a testimonial for them unto the angels. Lastly. The evidences of his right to and propriety in them, will then be made to appear. Mal 3:17: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." It is too late for persons to become his then;

so the meaning is, they shall evidently appear to be mine. *James Scot, 1773.*

**Verse 5.** *Gather my saints together unto me.* Our text may be considered as the commission given by the great Judge to his angels—those ministering spirits who do his will, hearkening to the voice of his power. The language of the text is in accordance with that which was uttered by our Lord when,

alluding to the coming of the Son of Man, he says, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." But previous to this final, this *general* gathering together of his saints to judgment,

Jehovah gathers them together in various ways, in various places, and by various means, both of providence and of grace. Previous to his being seated on a throne of judgment, we behold him sitting on a throne of mercy, and we hear him saying, *Gather my saints together unto me.* These words lead us to notice—I. The characters described, *My saints.* II. The command issued, *Gather my saints together unto me.*

1. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED—*my saints*, we are to understand *my holy ones*—those who have been sanctified and set apart by God. None of us possess this character by *nature*. We are

1. THE CHARACTERS HERE DESCRIBED—*my saints*, we are to understand *my holy ones*—those who have been sanctified and set apart by God. None of us possess this character by *nature*. We are

born sinners, and there is no difference; but by divine *grace* we experience a change of nature, and consequently a change of name. The title of saint is frequently given to the people of God in derision. "Such an one," says a man of the world, "is one of your saints." But, my brethren, no higher honour can be conferred upon us than to be denominated saints, if we truly deserve that character; but in what way do we become saints? We become saints—1. *By divine choice*. The saints are the objects of everlasting love; their names are written in the Lamb's book of life; and it is worthy of remark that wherever the people of God are spoken of in sacred Scripture, as the objects of that everlasting love, it is in connection with their *personal sanctification*. Observe, they are not chosen because they *are* saints, nor because it is foreseen that they *will* be so, but they are chosen *to be* saints; sanctification is the effect and the only evidence of election. We become saints—2. *By a divine change which is the necessary consequence of this election*. An inward, spiritual, supernatural, universal change is effected in the saints by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made partakers of a divine nature...Remember, then, this important truth, that Christians are called by the gospel to be saints; that you are Christians, not so much by your *orthodoxy* as by your *holiness*; that you are saints no further than as you are holy in all manner of conversation. 3. *The people of God furnish an evidence of being saints by their godly conduct*. "By their fruits," not by their feelings; not by their lips, not by their general profession, but, "by their fruits shall ye know them." 4. The character of the saints is evidenced *by divine consecration*. The people of God are called holy inasmuch as they are dedicated to God. It is the duty and the privilege of saints to consecrate themselves to the service of God. Even a heathen philosopher could say, "I *lend* myself to the *world*, but I *give* myself to the *gods*. But we possess more light and knowledge, and are therefore laid under greater obligation than was Seneca."

2. THE COMMAND ISSUED. *Gather my saints together unto me*. Jehovah gathers his saints to himself in various ways. 1. *He gathers them to himself in their conversion*. The commission given by Christ to his ministers is, "Go ye forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," or in other words, *Gather my saints together unto me*. The gospel is to be preached to *sinners* in order that they may become *saints*. 2. *Saints are gathered together by God in public worship*. 3. *He gathers his saints together to himself in times of danger*. When storms appear to be gathering around them, he is desirous to screen them from the blast. He say to them, in the language of Isaiah, "Come, my people, and enter into thy chamber—the chamber of my perfections and my promises—enter into thy chamber and shut the doors about thee, and hide thyself until the calamity is overpast."

**Verse 4.** *God gathers his saints together in the service of his church*. Thus Christ collected his apostles together to give them their apostolic commission to go and teach all nations. At the period of the Reformation, the great Head of the church raised up Luther and Calvin, together with other eminent reformers, in order that they might light up a flame in Europe, yea, throughout the world, that

the breath of popery should never be able to blow out. 5. *God gathers his saints together in death, and at the resurrection.* "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." This is the commission which death is habitually receiving—"Go, death, and gather such and such of my saints unto me." As the gardener enters the garden, and plucks up the full blown flower and the ripened fruit, so Jesus Christ enters the garden of his church and gathers his saints to himself; for he says, "Father, I will that all they whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, and behold my glory." *Condensed from J. Sibree's "Sermon preached at the reopening of Surrey Chapel, August 29th, 1830."*

**Verse 5.** (*second clause*). *Made, or ratifying a covenant; literally, cutting, striking, perhaps in allusion to the practice of slaying and dividing victims as a religious rite, accompanying solemn compacts.* (See Ge 15:10-18.) The same usage may be referred to in the following words, *over sacrifice, i.e., standing over it: or on sacrifice, i.e., founding the engagement on a previous appeal to God.* There is probably allusion to the great covenant transaction recorded in Ex 24:4-8. This reference to sacrifice shows clearly that what follows was not intended to discredit or repudiate that essential symbol of the typical or ceremonial system. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 5.** *Made a covenant with me.* Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; thus they called *sacramentum militare*, a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this, *Gather together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me.* We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we enlist ourselves in his muster roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies ...He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but, as one under his authority, go and come at his word. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 6.** *The heavens shall declare his righteousness.* It is the manner of Scripture to commit the teaching of that which it desires should be most noticeable and important to *the heavens and the earth:* for *the heavens* are seen by all, and their light discovers all things. Here it speaks of *the heavens*, not *the earth*, because these are everlasting, but not the earth. *Geier and Muis, in Poole's Synopsis.*

**Verse 8.** *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; i.e., for thy neglect of them, but for thy resting in them, sticking in the bark, bringing me the bare shell without the kernel, not referring to the right end and use, but satisfying thyself in the work done.* *John Trapp.*

**Verse 8.** *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings continually before me.* Those words *to have been*, which our translators supply, may be left out, and the sense remain perfect: or if those words be continued, then the negative particle *not*, is to be reassumed out of the first part of the

verse, and the whole read thus, *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt offerings not to have been continually before me.* That is, I will not charge thee with a neglect of outward duty or worship, the inward or spiritual (of which he speaks, Ps 50:14), being that which is most pleasing unto me. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verses 8-9.** It is the very remonstrance which our Lord himself makes against the Pharisees of his days, for laying so much stress on the outward observance of their own traditions, the washing of pots and cups and other such like things; the paying of tithes of anise and mint and cummin; the ostentatious fulfilment of all ceremonious observances in the eyes of men, the exalting the shadow to the exclusion of the substance. And have we not seen the like in our own days, even to the very vestment of the minister, the obeisance of the knee, and the posture of the body? as if the material church were all in all, and God were not Spirit, that demanded of those that worshipped him that they should worship him in spirit and in truth; as if the gold and ornaments of the temple were far beyond the hidden man of the heart in that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. *Barton Bouchier.*

**Verse 10.** *"For to me (belongs) every beast of the forest, the cattle in hills of a thousand."* This last idiomatic phrase may either mean a thousand hills, or hills where the cattle rove by thousands, with probable allusion to the hilly grounds of Bashan beyond Jordan. According to etymology, the noun in the first clause means an *animal*, and that in the second *beasts* or *brutes* in general. But when placed in antithesis, the first denotes a wild beast, and the second domesticated animals or cattle. Both words were necessary to express God's sovereign propriety in the whole animal creation. Thus understood, the verse assigns a reason for the negative assertion in the one before it. Even if God could stand in need of animal oblations, for his own sake, or for their sake, he would not be under the necessity of coming to man for them, since the whole animal creation is his property and perfectly at his disposal. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verses 11-12.** We show our scorn of God's sufficiency, by secret thoughts of meriting from him by any religious act, as though God could be indebted to us, and obliged by us. As though our devotions could bring a blessedness to God more than he essentially hath; when indeed "our goodness extends not to him." Ps 16:2. Our services to God are rather services to ourselves, and bring a happiness to us, not to God. This secret opinion of merit (though disputed among the Papists, yet) is natural to man; and this secret self pleasing, when we have performed any duty, and upon that account expect some fair compensation from God, as having been profitable to him; God intimates this: "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." He implies, that they wronged his infinite fulness, by thinking that he stood in need of their sacrifices and services, and that he was beholden to them for their adoration of him. All merit implies a moral or natural insufficiency in the person of whom we merit, and our doing

something for him, which he could not, or at least so well do for himself. It is implied in our murmuring at God's dealing with us as a course of cross providences, wherein men think they have deserved better at the hands of God by their service, than to be cast aside and degraded by him. In our prosperity we are apt to have secret thoughts that our enjoyments were the debts God owes us, rather than gifts freely bestowed upon us. Hence it is that men are more unwilling to part with their righteousness than with their sins, and are apt to challenge salvation as a due, rather than beg it as an act of grace. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 12.** *If I were hungry, etc.* Pagan sacrifices were considered as feasts of the gods. *Daniel Cresswell.*

**Verse 13.** *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* That is, did I want anything I would not tell thee; but hast thou indeed such gross notions of me, as to imagine that I have appointed and required the blood and flesh of animals for their own sake and not with some design? Dost thou think I am pleased with these, when they are offered without faith, love, and gratitude? Nay, offer the sacrifice of praise, etc. Render to me a spiritual and reasonable service, performing thy engagements, and then thou wilt find me a very present help in trouble. *B. Boothroyd.*

**Verse 15.** *Call upon me, etc.* Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him if he were in any distress send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth his people if they be in any perplexity to send this ring to him: *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* *George Swinnock.*

**Verse 15.** *Call upon me in the day of trouble, etc.* Who will scrape to a keeper for a piece of venison who may have free access to the master of the game to ask and have? Hanker not after other helpers, rely on him only, fully trusting him in the use of such means as he prescribes and affords. God is jealous, will have no co-rival, nor allow thee (in this case) two strings to thy bow. He who worketh all in all must be unto thee all in all; of, through, and to whom are all things, to him be all praise for ever. Ro 11:36. *George Gipps, in "A Sermon preached (before God, and from him) to the Honourable House of Commons," 1645.*

**Verse 15.** *Call upon me in the day of trouble, etc.* The Lord hath promised his children supply of all good things, yet they must use the means of impetration; by prayer. He feed the young ravens when they call upon him. Ps 147:9. He feeds the young ravens, but first they call upon him. God withholds from them that ask not, lest he should give to them that desire not. (Augustine.) David was confident that by God's power he should spring over a wall; yet not without putting his own strength and agility to it. Those things we pray for, we must work for. (Augustine.) The carter in Isidore, when his cart was overthrown, would needs have his god Hercules come down from heaven, to help him up with it; but whilst he forbore to set his own shoulder to it, his cart lay still. Abraham was as rich as any of our aldermen, David as valiant as any of our gentlemen, Solomon as wise as any of our deepest

naturians, Susanna as fair as any of our painted pieces. Yet none of them thought that their riches, valour, policy, beauty, or excellent parts could save them; but they stirred the sparks of grace, and bestirred themselves in pious work. And this is our means, if our meaning be to be saved. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 15.** *I will deliver thee: properly, I will draw forth with my own mighty hand, and plant thee in liberty and prosperity. Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 16.** *Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? etc.* "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." Is it not? No wonder then that divine wisdom requires us ourselves to put off the old man (as snakes put off their skins) before we take on us the most honourable office of reproving sin; a duty which above any other brings praise to God, and profit to men; insomuch that God hath not a more honourable work that I know of to set us about. And what think you? Are greasy scullions fit to stand before kings? Are dirty kennel rakers fit to be plenipotentiaries or ambassadors? Are unclean beasts fit to be made lord almoners, and sent to bestow the king's favours? Are swine fit to cast pearl, and the very richest pearl of God's royal word? No man dreams it; consequently none can believe himself qualified or commissioned to be a reprover of sin "till he is washed, till he is sanctified, till he is justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." A lunatick beggar in Athens would not believe but that all the ships in the harbour were his. His mistake exceeded not theirs, who persuade themselves that this richer office is theirs, before they are "alive from the dead," and "born of the Spirit," before they are returned to God or to themselves. The Duke of Alva is said to have complained that his king sent him in fetters to fight for him; because without his pardon given him, and while he was a prisoner, he employed him in war. But the Supreme King is a more merciful one, and orders our charity to begin at home; making it our first duty to break off our sins; and then when we have put off these our shackles, go to fight his battles. *Daniel Burgess (1645—1712-13) in "The Golden Sufferers."*

**Verse 16.** *The wicked.* By whom are meant, not openly profane sinners; but men under a profession of religion, and indeed who were teachers of others, as appears from the following expostulations with them: the Scribes, Pharisees, and doctors among the Jews, are designed, and so Kimchi interprets it of their wise men, who learnt and taught the law, but did not act according to it. *John Gill.*

**Verse 16.** *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? etc.* All the medieval writers teach us, even from the Mosaic law, concerning the leper, how the writer of this Psalm only put in words what those statutes expressed in fact. For so it is written: "The leper in whom the plague is, ...he shall put a covering upon his upper lip." As they all, following Origen, say: Let them who are themselves of polluted lips, take good heed not to teach others. Or, to take it in the opposite way, see how Isaiah would not speak to his people, because he was a man of polluted lips, and he dwelt among a people of polluted lips, till they had been touched with the living coal from the altar; and by that, as by a

sacrament of the Old Testament, a sentence of absolution had been pronounced upon them. *J. M. Neale.*

**Verse 16.** (*second clause*). Emphasis is laid on the phrase, *to declare God's statutes*, which both denotes such an accurate knowledge of them as one may obtain by *numbering* them, and a diligent and public review of them. Properly speaking the word is derived from the Arabic, and signifies *to reckon in dust*, for the ancients were accustomed to calculate in *dust* finely sprinkled over tablets of the Abacus. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 16.** *But unto the wicked God saith, What has thou to do...to take my covenant into thy mouth?* For whom is the covenant made but for the wicked? If men were not wicked or sinful what needed there a covenant of grace? The covenant is for the wicked, and the covenant brings grace enough to pardon those who are most wicked; why, then, doth the Lord say to the wicked, *What hast thou to do to take my covenant unto thy mouth?* Observe what follows, and his meaning is expounded: *Seeing thou hatest to be reformed.* As if God had said, You wicked man, who protects you sin, and holds it close, refusing to return and hating to reform; what hast thou to do to meddle with my covenant? Lay off thy defiled hands. He that is resolved to hold his sin takes hold of the covenant in vain, or rather he lets it go, while he seems to hold it. Woe unto them who sue for mercy while they neglect duty. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 16.** When a minister does not do what he teaches, this makes him a vile person; nay, this makes him ridiculous, like Lucian's apothecary, who had medicines in his shop to cure the cough, and told others that he had them, and yet was troubled with it himself. With what a forehead canst thou stand in a pulpit and publish the laws of God, and undertake the charge of souls, that when thine own nakedness appears, when thy tongue is of a larger size than thy hands, thy ministry is divided against itself, thy courses give thy doctrine the lie; thou sayest that men must be holy, and thy deeds do declare thy mouth's hypocrisy; thou doest more mischief than a hundred others. *William Fenner.*

**Verse 17.** *And castest my words behind thee. Thou castest away contemptuously*, with disgust and detestation, as idols are cast out of a city; or as Moses indignantly dashed to the earth the tables of the law. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 17.** *My words:* apparently the ten commandments, accustomed to be called the *ten words*, by which God is often said to have made his covenant with Israel. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 18.** *When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him; or didst run with him.* This was literally true of the Scribes and Pharisees; they devoured widow's houses, and robbed them of their substance, under a pretext of long prayers; they consented to the deeds of Barabbas, a robber, when they preferred him to Jesus Christ; and they joined with the thieves on the cross in reviling him; and, in a spiritual sense, they stole away the word of the Lord, every man from his neighbour; took away the key of knowledge from the people, and put false glosses upon the sacred writings. *John Gill.*

**Verse 18.** *Thou consentedst with him; became his accomplice. Sunetreces. LXX, i.e., you helped him to carry off his booty and to make his escape. Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 18.** *Thou consentedst with him.* Or, thou runnest along with him. *Hast been partaker with;* namely, thou art his companion; a term taken from commerce of merchants, or from banquets made after the ancient manner, to which divers did contribute, and had their shares therein. *John Diodati.*

**Verse 18.** *(last clause).* To give entertainment to them we know to be dissolute, is to communicate with their sins. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 19.** *Thou givest thy mouth to evil, etc. Thou givest.* Hebrew, *thou sendest forth;* to wit, free; for the word is used of men dismissing their wives or their servants, whom they left to their freedom. Thou hast an unbridled tongue, and castest off all restraints of God's law, and of thine own conscience, and givest thy tongue liberty to speak what you please, though it be offensive and dishonourable to God, and injurious to thy neighbour, or to thy own soul; which is justly produced as an evidence of their hypocrisy. *To evil,* either to sinful or mischievous speeches. *Frameth deceit, i.e.,* uttereth lies or fair words, wherewith to circumvent those who deal with them. *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 19.** The ninth commandment is now added to the other two, as being habitually violated by the person here addressed. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 20.** *Thou sittest and speakest, etc.* A man may both speak and do evil while he sits still and doth nothing; an idle posture may serve the turn for such work as that. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 20.** *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, etc.* When you are sitting still, and have nothing else to do, you are ever injuring your neighbour with your slanderous speech. Your table talk is abuse of your nearest friends. *Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 20.** *Thine own mother's son.* To understand the force of this expression, it is necessary to bear in mind that polygamy was allowed amongst the Israelites. Those who were born to the same father were all brethren, but a yet more intimate relationship subsisted between those who had the same mother, as well as the same father. *French and Skinner.*

**Verse 21.** *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence.* Neither sleep nor slumber, nor connivance, nor neglect of anything can be incident to God. Because he doth not execute present judgment and visible destruction upon sinners, therefore blasphemy presumptuously infers—will God trouble himself about such petty matters? So they imagined of their imaginary Jupiter. *Non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Jovem.* What a narrow and finite apprehension this is of God! He that causes and produces every action—shall he not be present at every action? What can we do without him, that cannot move but in him? He that taketh notice of sparrows, and numbers the seeds which the very ploughman thrusts in the ground, can any action of man escape his knowledge, or slip from his contemplation? He may seem to wink at things, but never shuts his eyes. He doth not always manifest a reprehensive knowledge, yet he always retains an apprehensive knowledge. Though

David smote not Shimei cursing, yet he heard Shimei cursing. As judges often determine to hear, but do not hear to determine; so though God does not see to like, yet he likes to see. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 21.** *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore Mr. Perkins affirms, that all men who ever came of Adam (Christ alone excepted) are by nature atheists; because at the same time that they acknowledge God, they deny his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed, it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with a conception of God as may be most favourable to and suit best with them. God charges some for this:

*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* Sinners do with God as the Ethiopians do with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 21.** *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* This men do when they plead for sins as little, as venial, as that which is below God to take notice of; because they themselves think it so, therefore God must think it so too. Man, with a giant like pride, would climb into the throne of the Almighty, and establish a contradiction to the will of God by making his own will, and not God's, the square and rule of his actions. This principle commenced and took date in Paradise, where Adam would not depend upon the will of God revealed to him, but upon himself and his own will, and thereby makes himself as God. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 21.** *I will set them in order before thine eyes.* This is to be understood *more militari*, when sins shall be set in rank and file, in bloody array against thy soul; or *more forensi*, when they shall be set in order as so many indictments for thy rebellion and treason. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 21.** *And set them in order before thine eyes:* as if he should say, Thou thoughtest all thy sins were scattered and dispersed; that there was not a sin to be found; that they should never be rallied and brought together; but I assure thee I will make an army of those sins, a complete army of them, I will set them in rank and file before thine eyes; and see how thou canst behold, much less contend with, such an host as they. Take heed therefore you do not levy war against your own souls; that's the worst of all civil or intestine wars. If an army of divine terrors be so fearful, what will an army of black, hellish sins be? when God shall bring whole regiments of sins against you—here a regiment of oaths, there a regiment of lies, there a third of false dealings, here a troop of filthy actions, and there a legion of unclean or profane thoughts, all at once fighting against thy life and everlasting peace. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 21.** Atheists do mock at those Scriptures which tell us that we shall give account of all our deeds; but God shall make them find the truth of it in that day of their reckoning. It is as easy for him to make their forgetful minds remember as to create the minds in them. When he applies his register to their forgetful spirits they shall see all their forgotten sins. When the printer presseth clean paper

upon his oiled irons, it receiveth the print of every letter: so when God shall stamp their minds with his register, they shall see all their former sins in a view. The hand was ever writing against Belshazzar, as he was ever sinning, though he saw it not till the cup was filled: so is it to the wicked; their sins are numbered, and themselves weighed, and see not till they be divided by a fearful waking. *William Struther.*

**Verse 21.** (*last clause*). *God setteth his sins in order before his eyes. Imprimis*, the sin of his conception. *Item*, the sins of his childhood. *Item*, of his youth. *Item*, of his man's estate, etc. Or, *Imprimis*, sins against the first table. *Item*, sins against the second; so many of ignorance, so many of knowledge, so many of presumption, severally sorted by themselves. He committed sins confusedly, huddling them up in heaps; but God *sets them in order*, and methodizes them to his hands. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Verse 22.** *Now consider this, ye that forget God*, etc. What is less than a grain of sand? Yet when it comes to be multiplied, what is heavier than the sands of the sea? A little sum multiplied rises high; so a little sin unrepented of will damn us, as one leak in the ship, if it be not well looked to, will drown us. "Little sins" as the world calls them, but great sins against the majesty of God Almighty, whose majesty, against which they are committed, doth accent and enhance them, if not repented of, will damn. One would think it no great matter *to forget God*, yet it has a *heavy doom* attending on it. The non improvement of talents, the non exercise of grace, the world looks upon as a small thing; yet we read of him who *hid* his talent in the earth—he had not spent it, only not trading it is sentenced. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 22.** *Lest I tear you in pieces*. This is a metamorphic expression, taken from the strength and irresistible fury of a lion, from which the interference of the shepherd can supply no protection, or defence, for his flock. *William Walford.*

**Verse 23.** *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me*. Thanksgiving is a God exalting work. Though nothing can add the least cubit to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. Praise is a setting forth of God's honour, a lifting up of his name, a displaying the trophy of his goodness, a proclaiming his excellency, a spreading his renown, a breaking open the box of ointment, whereby the sweet savour and perfume of God's name is sent abroad into the world. *To him that ordereth his conversation aright*. Though the main work of religion lies within, yet "our light must so shine," that others may behold it; the foundation of sincerity is in the heart, yet its beautiful front piece appears in the conversation. The saints are called "jewels," because they cast a sparkling lustre in the eyes of others. An upright Christian is like Solomon's temple, gold within and without: sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it be in the *heart* will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven. Php 3:20. *Thomas Watson.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** It unspeakably concerns *all* men to know what God has spoken. *W. S. Plumer.*

### **Verse 1.**

1. Who has spoken? The Mighty, not men or angels, but God himself.
2. To whom has he spoken? To all nations—all ranks—all characters. This calls for,
  - (a) Reverence—it is the voice of God.
  - (b) Hope—because he condescends to speak to rebels.
3. Where has he spoken?
  - (a) In creation.
  - (b) In providence.
  - (c) In his word. *G. R.*

### **Verses 1-6.**

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings.
2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat; Ps 50:2-3.
3. The parties summoned; Ps 50:8.
4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; Ps 50:6. —*Matthew Henry.*

### **Verses 1-15.**

1. God's call to man.
2. Man's call to God.

### **Verse 2.**

1. The internal beauty of Zion.
  - (a) *Positive* beauty of wisdom—holiness—love.
  - (b) *Comparative* with the beauty of Paradise and the heaven of angels.
  - (c) *Superlative*—all the perfections of God combined.
2. Its external glory. Out of it God hath shined.
  - (a) On this world.
  - (b) On gracious souls.
  - (c) On angels who desire to look, etc.
  - (d) On the universe. "All the creatures heard I, "etc.

### **Verse 4.**

1. What God will do for his people. He will judge them. (a) Deliver. (b) Defend. (c) Uphold.
2. The means at his disposal for this purpose. "He shall call, "etc.—Heaven and earth are subservient to him for the good of his church. *G. R.*

**Verse 4.** The judgment of the visible church. It will be by God himself, public, searching—with fire and wind, exact, final.

**Verse 5.** The great family gathering.

- (a) Who are gathered.
- (b) How they are gathered.
- (c) To whom.
- (d) When they are gathered.

**Verse 5** (*last clause*).

1. The covenant.
2. The sacrifice which ratifies it.
3. How we may be said to make it.

**Verse 6** (*last clause*). Then slander will not pervert the sentence, undue severity will not embitter it, partiality will not excuse, falsehood will not deceive, justice will surely be done.

**Verse 7.** Sins of God's people specially against God, and only known to God. A searching subject.

**Verses 13-15.** What sacrifices are not, and what are acceptable with God.

**Verse 15.**

1. The occasion—"trouble."
2. The command—"call upon me."
3. The promise—"I will deliver thee."
4. The design—"Thou shalt, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 15.** *Thou shalt glorify me.* This we do by praying, and by praising when prayer is heard; as also by confidence in his promises, submission to his chastisements, concern for his honour, attachment to his cause, affection to his people, and by continual obedience to his commands.

**Verse 15.**

1. A special invitation as to person and time.
2. Special promise to those accepting it.
3. Special duty involved when the promise is fulfilled.

**Verses 16-17.**

1. The prohibition given.
  - (a) The prohibited *things*—"declare my statutes." "Take my covenant, "etc. (1.) Preaching. (2.) Teaching, as in Sunday schools. (3.) Praying. (4.) Attending ordinances.
  - (b) Prohibited *persons*. Wicked preachers, etc., while they continue in wickedness.
2. The reason assigned; Ps 50:17.
  - (a) No self application of the truth.
  - (b) Inward hatred of it.
  - (c) Outward rejection. —*G. R.*

**Verse 17.**

1. *The fatal sign.* (a) Hating to be taught. (b) Hating what is taught.

2. *What it indicates:* (a) Pride. (b) Contempt of God. (c) Indifference to truth. (d) Atheism at heart. (e) Deadness of conscience.

3. *What it leads to.* See Ps 50:22.

**Verses 17-18.** Rejection of salutary instruction leads sooner or later to open transgression. Instances, reasons, inferential warnings.

**Verses 20-21.**

1. Man speaking and God silent.

2. God speaking and man silent.

**Verse 21.**

1. God leaves men for a time to themselves.

2. They judge of God on this account by themselves.

3. He will in due time reveal their whole selves to themselves. "I will reprove," etc. *G. R.*

**Verses 21, 23.** Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

**Verse 22.**

1. The accusation—"Ye that forget God, "his omniscience, his power, his justice, his goodness, his mercy, his word, his great salvation.

2. The admonition—"Consider this, "rouse yourselves from your forgetfulness into serious reflection.

3. The condemnation—"Lest, "etc. (a) The awfulness. "Tear, "as a lion or eagle its prey—tear body and soul. (b) Its irresistibility—"None to deliver." —*G. R.*

**Verses 21, 23.** Note the alternative; a life rightly ordered now, or sins set in order hereafter.

**Verse 23.**

1. Salvation is the work of God.

2. The evidence of salvation is holiness of heart and life.

3. The effect of that evidence is praise.

4. The tendency of that praise is to glorify God. God is not glorified by the doubts, and fears, and murmurings of his people, but by their praise. *G. R.*

**Verse 23.** (*last clause*). The true order of life.

1. That first which is first.

2. That most which is most.

3. That ever which is ever.

4. That all which is all.

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WORK UPON THE FIFTIETH PSALM

In the old quarto edition (1634) of "*Mr. Paul Bayne's Commentary on Colossians*," among the "*divers*

*places of Scripture briefly explained*, "there is an exposition of Ps 50:21-23, of this Psalm, entitled, "*The Terror of God displayed against carnal security.*"

## **Psalm 51**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

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**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician. Therefore not written for private meditation only, but for the public service of song. Suitable for the loneliness of individual penitence, this matchless Psalm is equally well adapted for an assembly of the poor in spirit. A Psalm of David. It is a marvel, but nevertheless a fact, that writers have been found to deny David's authorship of this Psalm, but their objections are frivolous, the Psalm is David like all over. It would be far easier to imitate Milton, Shakespeare, or Tennyson, than David. His style is altogether sui generis, and it is as easily distinguished as the touch of Rafaele or the colouring of Rubens. "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt, he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologize for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they reflect that the licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.

**DIVISION.** It will be simplest to note in the first twelve verses the penitent's confessions and plea for pardon, and then in the last seven his anticipatory gratitude, and the way in which he resolves to display it.

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### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He appeals at once to the mercy of God, even before he

mentions his sin. The sight of mercy is good for eyes that are sore with penitential weeping. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of pure mercy, and therefore to that attribute the awakened sinner flies. "*According to thy lovingkindness.*" Act, O Lord, like thyself; give mercy like thy mercy. Show mercy such as is congruous with thy grace.

"Great God, thy nature hath no bound:  
So let thy pardoning love be found."

What a choice word is that of our English version, a rare compound of precious things: love and kindness sweetly blended in one—"lovingkindness." *According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.* Let thy most loving compassions come to me, and make thou thy pardons such as these would suggest. Reveal all thy gentlest attributes in my case, not only in their essence but in their abundance. Numberless have been thine acts of goodness, and vast is thy grace; let me be the object of thine infinite mercy, and repeat it all in me. Make my one case an epitome of all thy tender mercies. By every deed of grace to others I feel encouraged, and I pray thee let me add another and a yet greater one, in my own person, to the long list of thy compassions. *Blot out my transgressions.* My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock for ever; many strokes of thy mercy may be needed, to cut out the deep inscription, but then thou has a multitude of mercies, and therefore, I beseech thee, erase my sins.

**Verse 2.** *Wash me thoroughly.* It is not enough to blot out the sin; his person is defiled, and he fain would be purified. He would have God himself cleanse him, for none but he could do it effectually. The washing must be thorough, it must be repeated, therefore he cries, "Multiply to wash me." The dye is in itself immovable, and I, the sinner, have lain long in it, till the crimson is ingrained; but, Lord, wash, and wash, and wash again, till the last stain is gone, and not a trace of my defilement is left. The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed, but the true suppliant cries, "wash *me.*" The careless soul is content with a nominal cleansing, but the truly awakened conscience desires a real and practical washing, and that of a most complete and efficient kind. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.* It is viewed as one great pollution, polluting the entire nature, and as all his own; as if nothing were so much his own as his sin. The one sin against Bathsheba, served to show the psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity, of which that foul deed was but one falling stone. He desires to be rid of the whole mass of his filthiness, which though once so little observed, had then become a hideous and haunting terror to his mind. *And cleanse me from my sin.* This is a more general expression; as if the psalmist said, "Lord, if washing will not do, try some other process; if water avails not, let fire, let anything be tried, so that I may but be purified. Rid me of my sin by some means, by any means, by every means, only do purify me completely, and leave no guilt upon my soul." It is not the punishment he cries out against, but the sin. Many a murderer is more alarmed at the gallows than at the murder

which brought him to it. The thief loves the plunder, though he fears the prison. Not so David: he is sick of sin as sin; his loudest outcries are against the evil of his transgression, and not against the painful consequences of it. When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. When we hate what the Lord hates, he will soon make an end of it, to our joy and peace.

**Verse 3.** *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* Here he sees the plurality and immense number of his sins, and makes open declaration of them. He seems to say, I make a full confession of them. Not that this is my plea in seeking forgiveness, but it is a clear evidence that I need mercy, and am utterly unable to look to any other quarter for help. My pleading guilty has barred me from any appeal against the sentence of justice: O Lord, I must cast myself on thy mercy, refuse me not, I pray thee. Thou hast made me willing to confess. O follow up this work of grace with a full and free remission! *And my sin is ever before me.* My sin as a whole is never out of my mind; it continually oppresses my spirit. I lay it before thee because it is ever before me: Lord, put it away both from thee and me. To an awakened conscience, pain on account of sin is not transient and occasional, but intense and permanent, and this is no sign of divine wrath, but rather a sure preface of abounding favour.

**Verse 4.** *Against thee, thee only have I sinned.* The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of this feeling of sin against God. All his wrong doing centred, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken hearted acknowledgment of offence against him. *And done this evil in thy sight.* To commit treason in the very court of the king and before his eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, places the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

**Verse 5.** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This was not intended to justify himself, but it rather meant to complete the confession. It is as if he said, not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner. The fountain of my life is polluted as well as its streams. My birth tendencies are out of the square of equity; I naturally lean to forbidden things. Mine is a constitutional disease, rendering my very person

obnoxious to thy wrath. *And in sin did my mother conceive me.* He goes back to the earliest moment of his being, not to traduce his mother, but to acknowledge the deep tap roots of his sin. It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who cavil at this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith. David's mother was the Lord's handmaid, he was born in chaste wedlock, of a good father, and he was himself, "the man after God's own heart; "and yet his nature was as fallen as that of any other son of Adam, and there only needed the occasion for the manifesting of that sad fact. In our shaping we were put out of shape, and when we were conceived our nature conceived sin. Alas, for poor humanity! Those who will may cry it up, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament his lost estate.

**Verse 6.** *Behold.* Here is the great matter for consideration. God desires not merely outward virtue, but inward purity, and the penitent's sense of sin is greatly deepened as with astonishment he discovers this truth, and how far he is from satisfying the divine demand. The second "Behold" is fitly set over against the first; how great the gulf which yawns between them! *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretence of purity, he looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions; to him the inward is as visible as the outward, and he rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it. *And in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* The penitent feels that God is teaching him truth concerning his nature, which he had not before perceived. The love of the heart, the mystery of its fall, and the way of its purification—this hidden wisdom we must all attain; and it is a great blessing to be able to believe that the Lord will "make us to know it." No one can teach our innermost nature but the Lord, but he can instruct us to profit. The Holy Spirit can write the law on our heart, and that is the sum of practical wisdom. He can put the fear of the Lord within, and that is the beginning of wisdom. He can reveal Christ in us, and he is essential wisdom. Such poor, foolish, disarranged souls as ours, shall yet be ordered aright, and truth and wisdom shall reign within us.

**Verse 7.** *Purge me with hyssop.* Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me with the appointed means. Give me the reality which legal ceremonies symbolise. Nothing but blood can take away my blood stains, nothing but the strongest purification can avail to cleanse me. Let the sin offering purge my sin. Let him who was appointed to atone, execute his sacred office on me; for none can need it more than I. The passage may be read as the voice of faith as well as a prayer, and so it runs—"Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, *and I shall be clean.*" Foul as I am, there is such power in the divine propitiation, that my sin shall vanish quite away. Like the leper upon whom the priest has performed the cleansing rites, I shall again be admitted into the assembly of thy people and allowed to share in the privileges

of the true Israel; while in thy sight also, through Jesus my Lord, I shall be accepted. *Wash me.* Let it not merely be in type that I am clean, but by a real spiritual purification, which shall remove the pollution of my nature. Let the sanctifying as well as the pardoning process be perfected in me. Save me from the evils which my sin has created and nourished in me. *And I shall be whiter than snow.* None but thyself can whiten me, but thou canst in grace outdo nature itself in its purest state. Snow soon gathers smoke and dust, it melts and disappears; thou canst give me an enduring purity. Though snow is white below as well as on the outer surface, thou canst work the like inward purity in me, and make me so clean that only an hyperbole can set forth my immaculate condition. Lord, do this; my faith believes thou wilt, and well she knows thou canst. Scarcely does Holy Scripture contain a verse more full of faith than this. Considering the nature of the sin, and the deep sense the psalmist had of it, it is a glorious faith to be able to see in the blood sufficient, nay, all sufficient merit entirely to purge it away. Considering also the deep natural inbred corruption which David saw and experienced within, it is a miracle of faith that he could rejoice in the hope of perfect purity in his inward parts. Yet, be it added, the faith is no more than the word warrants, than the blood of atonement encourages, than the promise of God deserves. O that some reader may take heart, even now while smarting under sin, to do the Lord the honour to rely thus confidently on the finished sacrifice of Calvary and the infinite mercy there revealed.

**Verse 8.** *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* He prays about his sorrow late in the Psalm; he began at once with his sin; he asks to hear pardon, and then to hear joy. He seeks comfort at the right time and from the right source. His ear has become heavy with sinning, and so he prays, "Make me to hear." No voice could revive his dead joys but that which quickeneth the dead. Pardon from God would give him double joy—"joy and gladness." No stinted bliss awaits the forgiven one; he shall not only *have* a double blooming joy, but he shall *hear* it; it shall sing with exultation. Some joy is felt but not heard, for it contends with fears; but the joy of pardon has a voice louder than the voice of sin. God's voice speaking peace is the sweetest music an ear can hear. *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* He was like a poor wretch whose bones are crushed, crushed by no ordinary means, but by omnipotence itself. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds; his firmest and yet most tender powers were "broken in pieces all asunder; "his manhood had become a dislocated, mangled, quivering sensibility. Yet if he who crushed would cure, every wound would become a new mouth for song, every bone quivering before with agony would become equally sensible of intense delight. The figure is bold, and so is the supplicant. He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God! Preposterous there most of all but for the cross where Jehovah Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. A penitent need not ask to be an hired servant, or settle down in despairing content with perpetual mourning; he may ask for gladness and he shall have it; for if when prodigals return the father is glad,

and the neighbours and friends rejoice and are merry with music and dancing, what need can there be that the restored one himself should be wretched?

**Verse 9.** *Hide thy face from my sins.* Do not look at them; be at pains not to see them. They thrust themselves in the way; but, Lord, refuse to behold them, lest if thou consider them, thine anger burn, and I die. *Blot out all mine iniquities.* He repeats the prayer of the first verse with the enlargement of it by the word "all." All repetitions are not "vain repetitions." Souls in agony have no space to find variety of language: pain has to content itself with monotones. David's face was ashamed with looking on his sin, and no diverting thoughts could remove it from his memory; but he prays the Lord to do with his sin what he himself cannot. If God hide not his face from our sin, he must hide it forever from us; and if he blot not out our sins, he must blot our names out of his book of life.

**Verse 10.** *Create.* What! has sin so destroyed us, that the Creator must be called in again? What ruin then doth evil work among mankind! *Create in me.* I, in my outward fabric, still exist; but I am empty, desert, void. Come, then, and let thy power be seen in a new creation within my old fallen self. Thou didst make a man in the world at first; Lord, make a new man in me! *A clean heart.* In the seventh verse he asked to be clean; now he seeks a heart suitable to that cleanliness; but he does not say, "Make my old heart clean; " he is too experienced in the hopelessness of the old nature. He would have the old man buried as a dead thing, and a new creation brought in to fill its place. None but God can create either a new heart or a new earth. Salvation is a marvellous display of supreme power; the work *in* us as much as that *for* us is wholly of Omnipotence. The affections must be rectified first, or all our nature will go amiss. The heart is the rudder of the soul, and till the Lord take it in hand we steer in a false and foul way. O Lord, thou who didst once make me, be pleased to new make me, and in my most secret parts renew me. *Renew a right spirit within me.* It was there once, Lord, put it there again. The law on my heart has become like an inscription hard to read: new write it, gracious Maker. Remove the evil as I have entreated thee; but, O replace it with good, lest into my swept, empty, and garnished heart, from which the devil has gone out for a while, seven other spirits more wicked than the first should enter and dwell. The two sentences make a complete prayer. *Create* what is not there at all; *renew* that which is there, but in a sadly feeble state.

**Verse 11.** *Cast me not away from thy presence.* Throw me not away as worthless; banish me not, like Cain, from thy face and favour. Permit me to sit among those who share thy love, though I only be suffered to keep the door. I deserve to be forever denied admission to thy courts; but, O good Lord, permit me still the privilege which is dear as life itself to me. *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* Withdraw not his comforts, counsels, assistances, quickenings, else I am indeed as a dead man. Do not leave me as thou didst Saul, when neither by Urim, nor by prophet, nor by dream, thou wouldst answer him. Thy Spirit is my wisdom, leave me not to my folly; he is my strength, O desert me not to my own weakness. Drive me not away from thee, neither do thou go away from me. Keep up the

union between us, which is my only hope of salvation. It will be a great wonder if so pure a spirit deigns to stay in so base a heart as mine; but then, Lord, it is all wonder together, therefore do this, for thy mercy's sake, I earnestly entreat thee.

**Verse 12.** *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* Salvation he had known, and had known it as the Lord's own; he had also felt the joy which arises from being saved in the Lord, but he had lost it for a while, and therefore he longed for its restoration. None but God can give back this joy; he can do it; we may ask it; he will do it for his own glory and our benefit. This joy comes not first, but follows pardon and purity: in such order it is safe, in any other it is vain presumption or idiotic delirium. *And uphold me with thy free Spirit.* Conscious of weakness, mindful of having so lately fallen, he seeks to be kept on his feet by power superior to his own. That royal Spirit, whose holiness is true dignity, is able to make us walk as kings and priests, in all the uprightness of holiness; and he will do so if we seek his gracious upholding. Such influences will not enslave but emancipate us; for holiness is liberty, and the Holy Spirit is a free Spirit. In the roughest and most treacherous ways we are safe with such a Keeper; in the best paths we stumble if left to ourselves. The praying for joy and upholding go well together; it is all over with joy if the foot is not kept; and, on the other hand, joy is a very upholding thing, and greatly aids holiness; meanwhile, the free, noble, royal Spirit is at the bottom of both.

**Verse 13.** *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways.* It was his fixed resolve to be a teacher of others; and assuredly none instruct others so well as those who have been experimentally taught of God themselves. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers. Huntingdon's degree of S.S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul winning evangelist than either M.A. or D.D. The pardoned sinner's matter will be good, for he has been taught in the school of experience, and his manner will be telling, for he will speak sympathetically, as one who has felt what he declares. The audience the psalmist would choose is memorable—he would instruct transgressors like himself; others might despise them, but, "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." If unworthy to edify saints, he would creep in along with the sinners, and humbly tell them of divine love. The mercy of God to one is an illustration of his usual procedure, so that our own case helps us to understand his "ways," or his general modes of action: perhaps, too, David under that term refers to the preceptive part of the word of God, which, having broken, and having suffered thereby, he felt that he could vindicate and urge upon the reverence of other offenders. *And sinners shall be converted unto thee.* My fall shall be the restoration of others. Thou wilt bless my pathetic testimony to the recovery of many who, like myself, have turned aside unto crooked ways. Doubtless this Psalm and the whole story of David, have produced for many ages the most salutary results in the conversion of transgressors, and so evil has been overruled for good.

**Verse 14.** *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness.* He had been the means of the death of Uriah, the Hittite,

a faithful and attached follower, and he now confesses that fact. Besides, his sin of adultery was a capital offence, and he puts himself down as one worthy to die the death. Honest penitents do not fetch a compass and confess their sins in an elegant periphrasis, but they come to the point, call a spade a spade, and make a clean breast of all. What other course is rational in dealing with the Omniscient? *O God, thou God of my salvation.* He had not ventured to come so near before. It had been, *O God,* up till now, but here he cries, *Thou God of my salvation.* Faith grows by the exercise of prayer. He confesses sin more plainly in this verse than before, and yet he deals with God more confidently: growing upward and downward at the same time are perfectly consistent. None but the King can remit the death penalty, it is therefore a joy to faith that God is King, and that he is the author and finisher of our salvation. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* One would rather have expected him to say, I will sing of thy mercy; but David can see the divine way of justification, that righteousness of God which Paul afterwards spoke of by which the ungodly are justified, and he vows to sing, yea, and to sing lustily of that righteous way of mercy. After all, it is the righteousness of divine mercy which is its greatest wonder. Note how David would preach in the last verse, and now here he would sing. We can never do too much for the Lord to whom we owe more than all. If we could be preacher, precentor, doorkeeper, pew opener, foot washer, and all in one, all would be too little to show forth all our gratitude. A great sinner pardoned makes a great singer. Sin has a loud voice, and so should our thankfulness have. We shall not sing our own praises if we be saved, but our theme will be the Lord our righteousness, in whose merits we stand righteously accepted.

**Verse 15.** *O Lord, open thou my lips.* He is so afraid of himself that he commits his whole being to the divine care, and fears to speak till the Lord unstops his shame silenced mouth. How marvellously the Lord can open our lips, and what divine things can we poor simpletons pour forth under his inspiration! This prayer of a penitent is a golden petition for a preacher, Lord, I offer it for myself and my brethren. But it may stand in good stead any one whose shame for sin makes him stammer in his prayers, and when it is fully answered, the tongue of the dumb begins to sing. *And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* If God opens the mouth he is sure to have the fruit of it. According to the porter at the gate is the nature of that which comes out of a man's lips; when vanity, anger, falsehood, or lust unbar the door, the foulest villainies troop out; but if the Holy Spirit opens the wicket, then grace, mercy, peace, and all the graces come forth in tuneful dances, like the daughters of Israel when they met David returning with the Philistine's head.

**Verse 16.** *For thou desirest not sacrifice.* This was the subject of the last Psalm. The psalmist was so illuminated as to see far beyond the symbolic ritual; his eye of faith gazed with delight upon the actual atonement. *Else would I give it.* He would have been glad enough to present tens of thousands of victims if these would have met the case. Indeed, anything which the Lord prescribed he would

cheerfully have rendered. We are ready to give up all we have if we may but be cleared of our sins; and when sin is pardoned our joyful gratitude is prepared for any sacrifice. *Thou delightest not in burnt offering.* He knew that no form of burnt sacrifice was a satisfactory propitiation. His deep soul need made him look from the type to the antitype, from the external rite to the inward grace.

**Verse 17.** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* All sacrifices are presented to thee in one, by the man whose broken heart presents the Saviour's merit to thee. When the heart mourns for sin, thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. "A broken heart" is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. So excellent is a spirit humbled and mourning for sin, that it is not only a sacrifice, but it has a plurality of excellences, and is preeminently God's sacrifices. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* A heart crushed is a fragrant heart. Men contemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what men esteem, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent, and never will he while God is love, and while Jesus is called the man who receiveth sinners. Bullocks and rams he desires not, but contrite hearts he seeks after; yea, but one of them is better to him than all the varied offerings of the old Jewish sanctuary.

**Verse 18.** *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.* Let blessings according to thy wont be poured upon thy holy hill and chosen city. Zion was David's favourite spot, whereon he had hoped to erect a temple. The ruling passion is so strong on him, that when he has discharged his conscience he must have a word for Zion. He felt he had hindered the project of honouring the Lord there as he desired, but he prayed God still to let the place of his ark be glorious, and to establish his worship and his worshipping people. *Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.* This had been one of David's schemes, to wall in the holy city, and he desires to see it completed; but we believe he had a more spiritual meaning, and prayed for the prosperity of the Lord's cause and people. He had done mischief by his sin, and had, as it were, pulled down her walls; he, therefore, implores the Lord to undo the evil, and establish his church. God can make his cause to prosper, and in answer to prayer he will do so. Without his building we labour in vain; therefore are we the more instant and constant in prayer. There is surely no grace in us if we do not feel for the church of God, and take a lasting interest in its welfare.

**Verse 19.** In those days of joyful prosperity thy saints shall present in great abundance the richest and holiest thank offerings to thee, and thou shalt be pleased to accept them. A saved soul expects to see its prayers answered in a revived church, and then is assured that God will be greatly glorified. Though we bring no more sacrifices for sin, yet as priests unto God our solemn praises and votive gifts are thank offerings acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. We bring not the Lord our least things—our doves and pigeons; but we present him with our best possessions—our bullocks. We are

glad that in this present time we are able to fulfil in person the declaration of this verse: we also, forecasting the future, wait for days of the divine presence, when the church of God, with unspeakable joy, shall offer gifts upon the altar of God, which will far eclipse anything beheld in these less enthusiastic days. Hasten it, O Lord.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** "*After he had gone in to Bathsheba.*" This was the devil's nest egg that caused many sins to be laid, one to, and upon another. See the woeful chain of David's lust, 2Sa 11:1-27 12:1-31. *John Trapp.*

**Title.** "*When Nathan the prophet came unto him as he (i.e., David) had come unto Bathsheba.*" The significant repetition of the phrase *came unto*, is lost in the English and most other versions. "*As*" is not a mere particle of time, simple equivalent to *when*, but suggests the idea of analogy, proportion, and retaliation. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm is the brightest gem in the whole book, and contains instruction so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongue of angels could not do justice to the full development. *Victorinus Strigelius, 1524-1569.*

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm is often and fitly called THE SINNER'S GUIDE. In some of its versions it often helps the returning sinner. Athanasius recommends to some Christians, to whom he was writing, to repeat it when they awake at night. All evangelical churches are familiar with it. Luther says, "There is no other Psalm which is oftener sung or prayed in the church." This is the first Psalm in which we have the word *Spirit* used in application to the Holy Ghost. *William S. Plumer.*

**Whole Psalm.** I cannot doubt the prophetic bearing of this Psalm upon the nation of Israel. In the latter day they shall consider their ways: repentance and self loathing will be the result. Blood guiltiness heavier than that of David has to be removed from that nation. They will become the teachers of the Gentiles, when first the iniquity of their own transgressions has been purged away. *Arthur Pridham.*

**Whole Psalm.** This is the most deeply affecting of all the Psalms, and I am sure the one most applicable to me. It seems to have been the effusion of a soul smarting under the sense of a recent and great transgression. My God, whether recent or not, give me to feel the enormity of my manifold offences, and remember not against me the sins of my youth. What a mine of rich matter and expression for prayer! Wash, cleanse me, O Lord, and let my sin and my sinfulness be ever before me. Let me feel it chiefly as sin against thee, that my sin may be of the godly sort. Give me to feel the virulence of my native corruption, purge me from it thoroughly, and put truth into my inward parts, that mine may be a real turning from sin unto the Saviour. Create me anew, O God. Withdraw not thy Spirit. Cause me to rejoice in a present salvation. Deliver me, O God, from the blood guiltiness of

having offended any of thy little ones; and so open my lips that I may speak of the wondrous things thou hast done for my soul! May I offer up spiritual sacrifices; and oh! let not any delinquencies of mine bring a scandal upon thy church; but do thou so purify and build her up, that even her external services, freed from all taint of corruption or hypocrisy, may be well pleasing in thy sight. *Thomas Chalmers.*

**Verse 1.** *Have mercy upon me, O God.* I tremble and blush to mention my name, for my former familiarities with thee only make me more confounded at being recognized by thee after my guilt. I therefore say not, "Lord, remember David," as on a happier occasion; nor as propitiating thee, I used to say, to thy "servant," or, "to the son of thy handmaid." I suggest nothing that should recall my former relation to thee, and so enhance my wickedness. Ask not, then, Lord, who I am, but only forgive me who confess my sin, condemn my fault, and beseech thy pity. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* I dare not say *my God*, for that were presumption. I have lost thee by sin, I have alienated myself from thee by following the enemy, and therefore am unclean. I dare not approach thee, but standing afar off and lifting up my voice with great devotion and contrition of heart, I cry and say, *Have mercy upon me, O God.* From "*A Commentary on the Seven Penitential Psalms, chiefly from ancient sources.*" By the Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, 1857.

**Verse 1.** *Have mercy.* The Hebrew word here translated *have mercy*. signifieth without cause or desert; Ps 35:19 69:4 Eze 14:23; and freely, without paying any price, Ex 21:11. And it is made use of in Le 6:8, where Noah is said to have found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord, that is, special favour, such as the Lord beareth to his chosen in Christ Jesus. *Charles D. Coetlogon, A.M., in "The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent," 1775.*

**Verse 1.** *Mercy, lovingkindness, tender mercies.* I cannot but observe here, the gradation in the sense of the three words made use of, to express the divine compassion, and the propriety of the order in which they are placed, which would be regarded as a real excellence and beauty in any classical writer. The first (yngx), denotes that kind of affection which is expressed by moaning over any object that we love and pity—that *otorge*, natural affection and tenderness, which even brute creatures discover to their young ones, by the several noises which they respectively make over them; and particularly the shrill noise of the camel, by which it testifies its love to its foal. The second, (Kdoxk), denotes a strong proneness, a ready, large, and liberal disposition to goodness and compassion powerfully prompting to all instances of kindness and bounty; flowing as freely and plentifully as milk into the breasts, or as waters from a perpetual fountain. This denotes a higher degree of goodness than the former. The third, (Kymxr), denotes what the Greeks express by *oplagncizeoyai*; that most tender pity which we signify by the moving of the heart and bowels, which argues the highest degree of compassion of which human nature is susceptible. And how reviving is the belief and consideration of these abundant and tender compassions of God to one in David's

circumstances, whose mind laboured under the burden of the most heinous complicated guilt, and the fear of the divine displeasure and vengeance! *Samuel Chandler*.

**Verse 1.** *According to the multitude.* Men are greatly terrified at the multitude of their sins, but here is a comfort—our God hath multitude of mercies. If our sins be in number as the hairs of our head, God's mercies are as the stars of heaven; and as he is an infinite God, so his mercies are infinite; yea, so far are his mercies above our sins, as he himself is above us poor sinners. By this the Psalmist seeketh for multitude of mercies, he would show how deeply he was wounded with his manifold sins, that one seemed a hundred. Thus it is with us, so long as we are under Satan's guiding, a thousand seem but one; but if we betake ourselves to God's service, one will seem a thousand. *Archibald Symson*.

**Verse 1.** *Tender mercies,* or, according to Zanchy in his treatise upon the attributes of God, such a kind of affection as parents feel when they see their children in any extremity. 1Ki 3:26. *Charles D. Coetlogon*.

**Verse 1.** *Blot out my transgressions.* (hxm), *mecheh, wipe out.* There is reference here to an *indictment*: the Psalmist knows what it contains; he pleads guilty, but begs that the writing may be *defaced*; that a proper fluid may be applied to the parchment, *to discharge the ink*, that no record of it may ever appear against him: and this only the *mercy, lovingkindness, and tender compassions*, of the Lord can do. *Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 1.** *Blot out my transgressions.* What the psalmist alludes is not, as Mr. Leclerc imagines, *debts entered into a book*, and so blotted out of it when forgiven; but the wiping or cleansing of a dish, so as nothing afterwards remains in it. The meaning of the petition is, that God would entirely and absolutely forgive him, so as that no part of the guilt he had contracted might remain, and the punishment of it might be wholly removed. *Samuel Chandler*.

**Verse 1.** *Blot out,* or, as it is used in Ex 17:14, *utterly extirpate*, so as that there shall not be any remembrance of them forever. Isa 43:25 44:22. *Charles de Coetlogon*.

**Verse 1.** *MY transgressions.* Conscience, when it is healthy, ever speaks thus: "MY *transgressions*." It is not the guilt of them that tempted you: they have theirs; but each as a separate agent, has his own degree of guilt. Yours is your own: the violation of your own and not another's sense of duty; solitary, awful, unshared, adhering to you alone of all the spirits of the universe. *Frederick William Robertson*.

**Verses 1, 5.** Transgressions...iniquity...sin.

1. It is *transgressions*, (evp), *pesha*, rebellion.

2. It is *iniquity*, (Nwe), *avon*, crooked dealing.

3. It is *sin*, (tajx), *chattath*, error and wandering. *Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 2.** *Wash me.* David prays that the Lord would *wash* him; therefore sin defiles, and he was

made foul and filthy by his sin; and to wash him much, and to rinse and bathe him, to show that sin had exceedingly defiled him and stained him both in soul and body, and made him loathsome, and therefore he desireth to be washed, and cleansed, and purged from the pollution of sin. Hence we may learn what a vile, filthy and miserable thing sin is in the sight of God: it stains a man's body, it stains a man's soul, it makes him more vile than the vilest creature that lives: no toad is so vile and loathsome in the sight of man, as a sinner, stained and defiled with sin, is in the sight of God, till he be cleansed and washed from it in the blood of Christ. *Samuel Smith.*

**Verse 2.** *Wash me*, etc. (Mbk) is peculiarly applied to the washing and cleansing of garments, as fullers wash and cleanse their cloths. 2Ki 18:7 Ex 19:10 Le 17:15. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 2.** *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.* No other washing will do but *lava tu*, wash thou; so foul as it will need his washing *thoroughly*. *Samuel Page, in "David's Broken Heart," 1646.*

**Verse 2.** *Was me thoroughly.* Hebrew *multiply to wash me*; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him, even of God's grace, and the blood of Christ. *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 2.** *Wash me...cleanse me.* But why should David speak so superfluously? use two words when one would serve? For if we be cleansed, what matter is it whether it be by washing or no? Yet David had great reason for using both words; for he requires not that God would cleanse him by miracle, but by the ordinary way of cleansing, and this was washing; he names therefore washing as the means, and cleansing as the end: he names washing as the work a doing, and cleansing as the work done; he names washing as considering the agent, and cleansing as applying it to the patient; and indeed, as in the figure of the law there was not, so in the verity of the gospel there is not any ordinary means of cleansing, but only by washing; and therefore out of Christ our Saviour's side there flowed water and blood. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 2.** *Cleanse me from my sin.* Observe, it is from the guilt, and not from the punishment, that he thus asked deliverance. That the sword should never depart from his house; that the sin, begun, not only secretly even in its full accomplishment, but far more secretly in the recesses of David's heart, should be punished before all Israel and before the sun; that the child so dear to David should be made one great punishment of his offence; these things, so far as this Psalm is concerned, might, or might not be. It is of the offence against God; of the defiling, although it were not then so expressly declared, God's temple by impurity, that David speaks. *Ambrose, in J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

**Verse 2.** *Sin.* The original word signifies to miss an aim, as an archer does who shoots short of his mark, beyond, or beside it. It is also used for treading aside, or tripping, in the act of walking. In a spiritual sense it denotes deviation from a rule, whether by omission or commission. *Thomas T. Biddulph, A.M., in Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, 1835.*

**Verse 2.** Sin is filthy to think of, filthy to speak of, filthy to hear of, filthy to do; in a word, there is

nothing in it but vileness. *Archibald Symson.*

**Verse 3.** *For I acknowledge my transgressions, etc.* To *acknowledge our transgressions*, there's confession; and *to have our sin ever before us*, there's conviction and contrition. To *acknowledge our transgressions*, I say, is to confess our sins; to call them to mind, to bring them back to our remembrance what we can; to own them with shame, and to declare them with sorrow; to reckon them up one by one, to give in a particular account of them, as far as our memory will serve, and to spread them before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakah's letter, and in a humble sense of our own vileness to implore his goodness, that he would multiply his mercies over us, as we have multiplied our transgressions against him, in their free and full forgiveness of them all. *To have our sin ever before us*, is throughly to be convinced of it, to be continually troubled in mind about it, to be truly humbled under the sense of it, and to be possessed of those dreads and terrors of conscience which may never let us rest or enjoy any quiet within our own breast till we have reconciled ourselves to a gracious God for it. *Adam Littleton.*

**Verse 3.** *I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* There cannot be *agnitio* if there be not *cognitio peccati*, and acknowledging, unless there precede a knowledge of sin. David puts them together. If our sins be not before us, how can we set them before God? And therefore, to the right exercise of this duty, there is required a previous examination of our hearts, inspection into our lives, that we may be enabled to see our sins. He that hath not yet asked himself that question, *Quid feci?* What have I done? can never make the confession, *si feci*, thus and thus have I done; and in this respect I would, thought not require, yet advise it as a pious and prudent practice, and that which I doubt not but many Christians have found benefit by, to keep a constant daily catalogue, as of mercies received, so of sins committed. *Nathaneal Hardy.*

**Verse 3.** *I, my, my.* David did not think it sufficient to acknowledge that the whole human race were sinners; but as if he stood alone in the world, and was the only offender in it, he says, "I acknowledge *my transgressions*; and *my sin is ever before me.*" *Charles de Coetlogon.*

**Verse 3.** *MY sin.* David owneth his sin, and confesseth it his own. Here is our natural wealth: what can we call our own but sin? Our food and raiment, the necessaries of life, are borrowings. We came hungry and naked into the world, we brought none of these with us, and we deserved none of them here. Our sin came with us, as David after confesseth. We have right of inheritance in sin, taking it by tradition and transmission from our parents: we have right of possession. So Job: "Thou makest me to possess the sins of my youth." *Samuel Page.*

**Verse 3.** *My SIN.* It is sin, as sin, not its punishment here, not hereafter, not simply any of its evil consequences; but sin, the sin against God, the daring impiety of my breaking the good and holy law of this living, loving God. *Thomas Alexander, D.D., in "The Penitent's Prayer," 1861.*

**Verse 3.** *Ever before me.* Sorrow for sin exceeds sorrow for suffering, in the continuance and

durableness thereof: the other, like a landlord, quickly come, quickly gone; this is a continual dropping or running river, keeping a constant stream. *My sins*, saith David, *are ever before me*; so also is the sorrow for sin in the soul of a child of God, morning, evening, day, night, when sick, when sound, fasting, at home, abroad, ever within him. This grief begins at his conversion, continues all his life, ends only at his death. *Thomas Fuller*.

**Verse 3.** *Before me. Coram populo*, before the people; shame to him: *coram ecclesia*, before the church; grief to them: *coram inimicis*, before the enemies; joy to them: *coram Deo*, before God; anger against him: *coram Nathane*, before Nathan; a chiding. But if any hope of repentance and amendment, it is *peccatum meum coram me, my sin before me*. Here is the distress of a sinner, he never discerneth how unhappy he is, till his sin is before him. *Samuel Page*.

**Verse 4.** *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*. This verse is differently expounded by different persons, and it has ever been considered, that this one little point is the greatest difficulty that is met with in the whole Psalm. Although, therefore, I leave it to others to go according to their own interpretations, yet I have a good hope that I shall be enabled to give the true and genuine meaning of the text. This, then, I would first of all advise the reader to do—to bear in mind that which I observed at the beginning of the Psalm, that David is here speaking in the person of all the saints, and not in his own person only, not in his own person as an adulterer. Although I do not say it might not be, that it was this fall which, as a medium, brought him under the knowledge of himself and of his whole human nature, and made him think thus: "Behold! I, so holy a king, who have with so much pious devotedness observed the law and the worship of God, have been so tempted and overcome by the inbred evil and sin of my flesh, that I have murdered an innocent man, and have for adulterous purposes taken away his wife! And is not this an evident proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than ever I thought it was? I who was yesterday chaste am today an adulterer! I who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, am today a man of blood guiltiness!" And it might be that in this way he derived the feeling sense of his entire sinfulness, from his fall into adultery and murder, and from thence drew his conclusion—that neither the tree nor the fruit of human nature were good, but that the whole was so deformed and lost by sin, that there was nothing sound left in the whole of nature. This I would have the reader bear in mind, first of all, if he desire to have the pure meaning of this passage. In the next place, the grammatical construction is to be explained, which seems to be somewhat obscure. For what the translator has rendered by the *preterperfect*, ought to be the *present*. *Against thee only do I sin*; that is, I know that before thee I am nothing but a sinner; or, before thee I do nothing but evil continual; that is, my whole life is evil and depraved on account of sin. I cannot boast before thee of merit or of righteousness, but am evil altogether, and in thy sight this is my character—I do evil. I have sinned, I do sin, and shall sin to the end of the chapter. *Martin Luther*.

**Verse 4.** *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* Is there not matter here to make us at a stand? For, to say, "Against thee have I sinned," is most just and fit; but to say, *Against THEE ONLY I have sinned*, seems something hard. It had perhaps been a fit speech in the mouth of our first parent Adam; he might justly have said to God, *Against thee only have I sinned*, who never sinned against any other; but for us to say it, who commit sins daily against our neighbours, and especially for David to say it, who had committed two notorious sins against his neighbour and faithful friend Uriah, what more unfit speech could possibly be devised? But is it not that these actions of David were great wrongs indeed, and enormous iniquities against Uriah; but can we properly say they were *sins* against Uriah? For what is sin, but a transgression of God's law? And how then can sin be committed against any but against him only whose law we transgress? Or is it, that it may justly be said, *Against thee only have I sinned*, because against others perhaps in a base *tenure*, yet only against God in *capite*? Or is it, that David might justly say to God, "*Against thee only have I sinned*;" because from others he might appeal, as being a king and having no superior; but no appealing from God, as being King of kings and supreme Lord over all? Or is it that we may justly say, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*, seeing that Christ hath taken and still takes all our sins upon him; and every sin we commit is as a new burden laid upon his back and upon his back only? Or is it, lastly, that I may justly say, *Against thee, the only, have I sinned*, because in thy sight only I have done it? For from others I could hide it, and did conceal it? But what can be hidden from the All-seeing eye? And yet if this had been the worst, that I had sinned only against thee, though this had been bad enough, and infinitely too much, yet it might perhaps have admitted reconciliation; but to do this evil *in thy sight*, as if I should say, I would do it though thou stand thyself and look on, and as if in defiance; what sin so formidable? what sin can be thought of so unpardonable? A sin of infirmity may admit apology; a sin of ignorance may find out excuse; but a sin of defiance can find no defence. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 4.** *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* There is a godly sorrow which leads a man to life; and this sorrow is wrought in a man by the Spirit of God, and in the heart of the godly; that he mourns for sin because it has displeased God, who is so dear and so sweet a Father to him. And suppose he had neither a heaven to lose, nor a hell to gain, yet he is sad and sorrowful in heart because he has grieved God. *John Welch, 1576-1622.*

**Verse 4.** *Have I sinned. Me, me, adsum, qui feci:* Here, here am I that did it. I whom thou tookest from following the ewes great with lambs, whose sheep hook thou hast changed for a sceptre, whose sheep for thine own people Israel, upon whose head thou hast set a crown of pure gold. I whom thou didst lately invest in the full monarchy of thy people; to whom thou gavest the possession of Jerusalem from the Jebusites; I who settled peace, religion, and courts of justice in Jerusalem, that thou mightest be served and honoured, and I would fain have built thee an house there; *Ego*, I, to whom God committed the trust of government to rule others, the trust of judgment to punish others,

as king over his inheritance. I, to whom God committed the care of others' souls to guide them by his word, to direct them by good counsel, to allure them by his gracious promises, to terrify them by his threatenings, as the Lord's holy prophet. I, who both ways as king and prophet should have been an example of holiness and righteousness to all Israel. Nathan said, *Tu es homo*, thou art the man, in just accusation, and now David saith, *Ego sum homo*, I am the man, in humble confession. *Samuel Page.*

**Verse 4.** *I have done this evil.* We may find this in experience, that there be many who will not stick at a general speech that they be sinners, and yet will scarcely be known of one special evil to account for. If you fall with them into the several commandments, they will be ready to discover a conceit that there is scarce one that they are faulty in. In the first commandment they acknowledge no God but one; in the second, they do not worship images; in the third, they swear as little as any, and never but for the truth; in the fourth, they keep their church on Sundays as well as most; in the second table, there is neither treason, nor murder, nor theft, nor whoredom, nor the like gross sin, but concerning it they are ready to protest their innocency. He that shall hear them in particular, I do not see how he shall believe them in the general, when they say they be sinners; for when you arraign them at the several commandments they are ready to plead *not guilty* to them all. So long as men are thus without sense and apprehension of particulars, there is no hope of bringing them ever unto good. Happy is he that is pricked to the heart with the feeling of *this evil*. The truth of repentance for that one, will bring him to a thorough repentance for his whole estate. *This one evil* thoroughly understood, brought David on his knees, brake his heart, melted his soul, made him cry for pardon, beg for purging, and importune the Lord for a free spirit to establish him. *Samuel Hieron, in "David's Penitential Psalm opened," 1617.*

**Verse 4.** *In thy sight.* David was so bent upon his sin, as that the majesty and presence of God did not awe him at all: this is a great aggravation of sin, and which makes it to be so much the more heinous. For a thief to steal in the very sight of the judge, is the highest piece of impudence that may be; and thus it is for any man to offend in the sight of God and not to be moved with it. *Thomas Horton.*

**Verse 4.** *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* But hath not David a defence for it here, and that a very just one? For, in saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, *that thou mightest be justified in thy saying,* " doth he not speak as though he had sinned to do God a pleasure? therefore sinned that God might be justified? And what can be more said for justifying of God? But far is it from David to have any such meaning; his words import not a lessening but an aggravating of his sin, as spoken rather thus: Because a judge may justly be taxed of injustice if he lay a greater punishment upon an offender than the offence deserves; therefore to clear thee, O God, from all possibility of erring in this kind, I acknowledge my sins to be so heinous,

my offences so grievous, that thou canst never be unmerciful in punishing though thy punishment should be never so unmerciful. For how can a judge pass the bounds of equity where the delinquent hath passed all bounds of iniquity? and what error can there be in thy being severe when the greatness of my fault is a justification of severity? That thou canst not lay so heavy a doom upon me, which I have not deserved? Thou canst not pronounce so hard a sentence against me, which I am not worthy of. If thou judge me to torture, it is but mildness; if to die the death, it is but my due; if to die everlastingly, I cannot say it were unjust. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 5.** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*, etc. He said not, "Behold, this evil have I done, "but, *Behold, I was conceived in sin*, etc. He says not, "Behold, I, David, "a king, that have received such and such mercies from God, who would have given me more (as God told him), who had that entire communion with him, and graces from him, I, even I, have done this evil. No; he keeps it in till he came to this, and then his heart could hold no longer: *Oh, behold I was conceived in sin*. His debasement was at his *auge* here. And to whom is it he utters this *behold*? What, to men? No; his meaning is not to call on men, *q.d.*, O ye sons of men, behold! That is but his secondary aim, arising out of his having penned it, and delivered it unto the church; but when he uttered it, it was to God, or rather afore God, and yet not as calling on God to behold, for that needed not. David had elsewhere said, "God looked down, "etc., "and beheld the sons of men, "when speaking of this very corruption. He therefore knew God beheld it sufficiently; but he utters it afore God, or, as spoken of himself between God and himself, thereby to express his own astonishment and amazement at the sight and conviction of this corruption, and at the sight of what a monster he saw himself to be in the sight of God in respect of this sin. It was a *behold* of astonishment at himself, as before the great and holy God; and therefore it was he seconds and follows it with another *behold* made unto God: "*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*" And it is as if he had said in both, Oh, how am I in every way overwhelmed, whilst with one eye cast on myself I see how infinitely corrupt I am in the very constitution of my nature; and with the other eye I behold and consider what an infinite holy God thou art in thy nature and being, and what an holiness it is which thou requirest. I am utterly overwhelmed in the intuition of both these, and able to behold no more, nor look up unto thee, O holy God! *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 5.** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*, etc. We are not to suppose that David here reflects upon his parents as the medium of transmitting to him the elements of moral evil; and that by the introduction of the doctrine of original sin he intended to extenuate the enormity of his own crimes. On the contrary, we are to regard him as afflicting himself by the humbling consideration that his very nature was fallen, that his transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God; that he was not a sinner by accident, but by a depravity of purpose extending to the innermost desires and purposes of the soul; and that there was "a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind,

and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death" Ro 7:23; and that he was one of a race of guilty beings, none of whom could plead an exemption from an evil heart of unbelief, ready at all times to depart from the living God. Till we see sin in the fountain of the heart, we shall never truly mourn over it in the life and conversation. *John Morison.*

**Verse 5.** *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He is not low enough down yet, he must come lower. It is not enough for him to confess that the water is filthy at the pool; he goes back to the source, and confesses that the whole river is polluted up to its head. The source is unclean; the very spring wells forth foul waters. *Thomas Alexander.*

**Verse 5.** *I was shapen in iniquity.* I shall not easily be persuaded to think that parents who are sinners themselves and too much under the influence of bad affections and passions, will be very likely to produce children without transmitting to them some of those disorders and corruptions of nature with which they themselves are infected. And if this be a difficulty, I would beg leave to observe that it is a difficulty which affects natural as well as revealed religion. Since we must take human nature as it is, and if it be really in a state of disorder and corruption, and cannot be otherwise, considering the common law of its production, the difficulty must have been as ancient as the first man that was born; and therefore can be no objection against the truth of revelation, but it must be equally so against natural religion, which must equally allow the thing, if it be in reality a fact, with revelation itself. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 5.** Infants are no innocents, being born with original sin, the first sheet wherein they are wrapped is woven of sin, shame, blood, and filth. Eze 16:4, etc. They are said to sin as they were in the loins of Adam, just as Levi is said to pay tithes to Melchizedek, even in the loins of his forefather Abraham Heb 7:9-10; otherwise infants would not die, for death is the wages of sin Ro 6:23; and the reign of death is procured by the reign of sin, which hath reigned over all mankind except Christ. All are sinners, infected with the guilt and filth of sin; the rot (according to the vulgar saying) over runs the whole flock. Hence David reflects upon original sin as the cause of all his actual, saying, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* Thus man's malady bein'd betimes, even in our conception; this subtle serpent sowed his tares very early, so that we are all "born in sin." Joh 9:34. *Christopher Ness's "Divine Legacy," 1700.*

**Verse 5.** Notwithstanding all that Grotius and others have said to the contrary, I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called *original sin*; the propensity to evil which every man brings into the world with him, and which is the fruitful source whence all transgression proceeds. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 6.** *Behold.* Before he entereth on any of the parts of the verse he useth the particle of admiration, *Behold*; which he never useth but in some remarkable manner, thereby the more to raise us up to the contemplation of such great matters to be told. *Archibald Symson.*

**Verse 6.** *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Thou lovest *truth*, not shadows or images, but

realities; thou lovest truth *in the inward parts*, inside truth, a true heart, a pure conscience: he is a Christian who is one inwardly. Ro 2:29. *John Bull*.

**Verse 6.** *Truth in the inward parts.* A great French pear is called *le bon hretien*, the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core. *George Swinnoek*.

**Verse 6.** *In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Piscator, in his annotations on this Psalm, puts this sense upon it, that David should bless God for having made him to know this special wisdom in this hidden thing or matter, and had brought the knowledge thereof home, as a point of saving wisdom, to the hidden man of his heart, so as to see fully and clearly this native corruption as the cause of all sin, and on that account to cause him to lay it to heart. *Thomas Goodwin*.

**Verse 6.** *In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* It is one thing to be wise headed and wise tongued, and another to be wise hearted, and therefore in Scripture nothing more ordinary than to set forth wisdom that is true indeed by the heart. God himself is said *to be wise of heart*. Foolish creatures are like Ephraim, "a silly dove without heart." They may have *head* enough, notion enough, *flashing light*, appearing to others enough, but they are without a heart; they have not the great work there, a *new head* and an *old heart*, a *full head* and an *empty heart*, a *light and burning profession*, and a dark, dead, and cold heart; he that takes up in such a condition is a fool and an errant fool. *John Murcot, 1657*.

**Verse 6.** *And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* Some read it, "In the hidden part thou *hadst* made me to know wisdom; *that* thou hadst done it, but I have fallen from my high state, marred thy handiwork. "By one plunge into lust I have fallen and fouled myself." *Arthur Jackson*.

**Verse 6.** The copulative particle which connects the two clauses, implies the correspondence between the revelation of the divine will on the one part and the desire and prayer of the penitent heart on the other. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.* "What I want thou hast promised to give." Repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and the awakened mind is conscious that they are so. *Thomas T. Biddulph*.

**Verses 6-8.** The right conviction of sin comprehends its being acknowledged not only in our *works*, but also in our entire *being*. *Agustus F. Tholuck*.

**Verse 8.** *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* This is the exceeding great love of the Lord toward his children, that he hath not only provided a sure salvation for them through the remission of their sins in Christ Jesus, but also seals up in their heart the testimony thereof by his Holy Spirit of adoption, that for their present consolation, lest they should be swallowed up of heaviness through continual temptations. Though he speak not to all his children as he did to Daniel, by an angel, "O man, greatly beloved of God, "nor as he did to the blessed Virgin Mary, "Hail, Mary, freely beloved, "yet doth he witness the same to the hearts of his children by an inward testimony: when they hear it they are

alive; when they want it they are but dead; their souls refuse all other comforts whatsoever. *William Cowper.*

**Verse 8.** *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* As a Christian is the most sorrowful man in the world, so there is none more glad than he. For the cause of his joy is greatest. In respect his misery was greatest, his delivery greatest, therefore his joy greatest. From hell and death is he freed, to life in heaven is he brought...The person from whom he seeketh this joy is God: *Make me to hear*, saith he; whereby he would teach us that this joy cometh only from God; it is he who is the fountain of joy and all pleasure, for "all good things come from above." Natural joys proceed from a natural and fleshly fountain; spiritual joys spring only from God: so he who seeketh those joys beneath seeketh hot water under cold ice. *Archibald Symson.*

**Verse 8.** *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* Another reference to the expiation of the leper, whose ear was to be touched with the blood of the trespass offering and the oil, as well as thumb and toe, to show that his faculties were now prepared for the service of God; so David prays that his ears may be sanctified to the hearing of joy and gladness; this an unsanctified heart can never receive. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 8.** *The bones which thou hast broken.* God, in favour to his children, doth afflict them for sin; and the very phrase of breaking his bones, though it express extremity of misery and pain, yet it hath hope in it, for broken bones by a cunning hand may be set again and return to their former use and strength; so that a conscience distressed for sins is not out of hope; yet upon that hope no wise man will adventure upon sin, saying, though I am wounded, yet I may be healed again; though I am broken, I may be repaired; for let him consider—1. Who breaks his bones—*Thou*; he that made us our bones and put them in their several places, and tied them together with ligaments, and covered them with flesh; he that keepeth all our bones from breaking; it must be a great matter that must move him to break the bones of any of us. The God of all consolation, that comforteth us in all our distresses, when he cometh to distress us, this makes affliction weigh heavy...2. The pain of the affliction expressed so feelingly in the breaking of bones, which, as is said, is the anguish of the soul for sin, and fear of the consuming fire of God's wrath, and the tempest, as Job calls it, of anger. 3. The pain of setting these bones again: for, though bones dislocated may be put in joint, and though bones broken may be set again, yet this is not done without pain and great extremity to the patient. Repentance setteth all our broken, pained bones; it recovers the soul from the anguish thereof; but he that once feels the smart of a true repentance, will say, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are as hard a bargain as ever he made, and as dear bought; they cost tears, which are *sanguis vulnerati cordis*, the blood of a wounded heart; they cost sighs and groans which cannot be expressed; they cost watching, fasting, taming of the body to bring it in subjection, even to the crucifying of the flesh with the lusts thereof. Therefore, let no man adventure his bones in hope of setting them again. *Samuel Page.*

**Verse 8.** *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* The displeasure which God expressed against the sins he had been guilty of, and the deep sense he had of the aggravated nature of them, filled him with those pains and agonies of mind, as that he compares them to that exquisite torture he must have felt had all his bones been crushed, for the original word (tykd), signifies more than broken, namely, being entirely mashed; and he compares the joy that God's declaring himself fully reconciled to him would produce in his mind, to that inconceivable pleasure, which would arise from the instantaneous restoring and healing those bones, after they had been thus broken and crushed to pieces. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 9.** *Hide thy face from my sins.* The verb (rtk) properly signifies *to veil*, or hide with a veil. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 9.** *Hide thy face from my sins.* He said in the third verse, that his sin was always in his sight; and now he prays that God would put it out of his sight. This is a very good order. If we hold our sins in our eyes to pursue them, God will cast them behind his back to pardon them: if we remember them and repent, he will forget them and forgive: otherwise, *peccatum unde homo non advertit Deus: et si advertit, animadvertit*—the sin from which man turns not, God looks to it; and if he look to it, sure he will punish it. *William Cowper.*

**Verse 9.** *All mine iniquities.* See how one sin calleth to mind many thousands, which though they lie asleep a long time, like a sleeping debt, yet we know not how soon they may be reckoned for. Make sure of a general pardon, and take heed of adding new sins to the old. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 10.** *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* O you that created the first heaven and the first earth of nothing! O you that will create the *new heaven* and the *new earth* (wherein dwells righteousness), when sin had made the creature worse than nothing! O you that creates the *new creature*, the new man, fit to be an inhabitant of the new world, of the new Jerusalem! O thou that hast said, "Behold, I make all things new:" *create* thou in me, even in me, *a clean heart; and renew a right spirit within me.* *Matthew Lawrence.*

**Verse 10.** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, etc.* David prayeth the Lord *to create him a new heart*, not to correct his old heart, but to create him a new heart; showing that his heart was like an old garment, so rotten and tattered that he could make no good of it by patching or piecing, but even must cut it off, and take a new. Therefore Paul saith, "Cast off the old man; "not pick him and wash him till he be clean, but cast him off and begin anew, as David did. Will ye know what this renewing is? It is the repairing of the image of God, until we be like Adam when he dwelt in Paradise. As there is a whole old man, so there must be a whole new man. The old man must change with the new man, wisdom for wisdom, love for love, fear for fear; his worldly wisdom for heavenly wisdom, his carnal love for spiritual love, his servile fear for Christian fear, his idle thoughts for sanctified works. *Henry Smith.*

**Verse 10.** *Create in me a clean heart.* *Creating*, to speak properly, is to make of nought, and is here used improperly. The prophet speaketh according to his own feeling and present judgement of himself, as though he had lost all, and had no goodness in himself. No doubt the prophet's heart was in part clean, though not so much as he desired. These things thus opened, here cometh a question first to be answered. *Quest.* Whether David could have lost the cleanness of heart, having once had it? *Ans.* No. The gifts and calling of God, that is (as I take it), the gifts of effectual calling, are such as God never repenteth of or taketh away. Faith, hope, and charity are abiding gifts, as sure as the election of God, which is unchangeable. Indeed, the children of God, if we only considered them in themselves with their enemies, might fall away, but being founded upon the unchangeable nature of God, and immutability of his counsel, they cannot, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them, the elect cannot be deceived or plucked out of Christ's hands. Nay, certain it is that David did not actually leave his former cleanness. For sure it is, his heart smiting him (as here it did), so doing before in less matters, it was not wholly void of cleanness. And again, it could not pray for cleanness if it were not somewhat clean. This is most sure, that by grievous sins much filthiness cometh to the soul, as by a boisterous wind a tree may lose his leaves and some branches, so as that the party sinning may be brought into as great passions almost as if he had lost all, but the desire of grace is an infallible certainty of some grace of that kind. The prophet therefore desireth not a clean heart because he had it not in any sort, but because he could not so well perceive it in himself, and take such comfort in it as he had done before, and for that he desired it a great deal more than now he had it. So learned, so rich men, think themselves not learned, not rich, in respect of that which they do desire, and when the sun is up, the moon seemeth to have no light. *George Estey, in "Certain Godly and Learned Expositions," 1603.*

**Verse 10.** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, etc.* This "creation" is from nothing. David uses the same word of our creation which Moses uses of "the creation of the heaven and the earth." Our creation "in Jesus Christ" is no mere strengthening of our powers, no mere aiding of our natural weakness by the might of the grace of God, it is not a mere amendment, improvement of our moral habits; it is a creation out of nothing, of that which we had not before. There was nothing in us whereof to make it. We were decayed, corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. What is dead becometh not alive, except by the infusion of what it had not. What is corrupt receiveth not soundness, save by passing away itself and being replaced by a new production. "The old man" passeth not into the new man, but is "put off." It is not the basis of the new life, but a hindrance to it. It must be "put off" and the new man "put on," created in Christ Jesus. *E. B. Pusey, D.D., 1853.*

**Verse 10.** (*first clause*). He used the word *creat* (Heb. *Bara*), a word only used of the work of God, and showing that the change in him could be wrought only by God. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 10.** *A clean heart.* The priest was required to make a strict examination of the skin of the leper

before he could pronounce him clean; David prays God to make his heart clean. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 10.** *A right spirit. A steadfast spirit, i.e., a mind steady in following the path of duty. French and Skinner.*

**Verses 10-12.** Who was to do this work? Not *himself*; God alone. Therefore, he prays: "O God, create—O lord, renew; uphold by thy Spirit." *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 11.** *Cast me not away from thy presence.* David lamented before that sin had slain him, and made him like a dead man, wanting a heart or quickening spirit; and now he fears lest, as the dead are abhorred by the living, so the Lord should cast him as a dead and abominable thing out of his presence. Whereof we learn this is one of the just punishments of sin; it procures the casting out of a man from the face of God; and it may let us see how dear bought are the pleasures of sin when a man to enjoy the face of the creature deprives himself of the comfortable face of the Creator; as David here, for the carnal love of the face of Bathsheba, puts himself in danger to be cast out forever from the presence of the Lord his God. If a man could remember this in all Satan's temptations, what it is that the deceiver offers, and what it is again that he seeks, he would be loath to buy the perishing pleasures of sin upon such a price as Satan selleth them, but would answer him as the apostle did Simon Magus, "Thy money, with thyself, go into perdition; thy gain, thy glory, thy pleasure, and whatever thou wouldst give me to offend the Lord my God, go with thyself into perdition, for what canst thou offer me comparable to that which thou wouldst steal from me? But how is it that he prays, *Cast me not out from thy presence?* May a man be cast any way from it? Saith he not himself, "What way can I flee from thy presence?" This is soon answered by distinguishing his twofold presence—one in mercy, wherewith he refresheth and comforteth his own, and this without intermission they enjoy who are in heaven; another, in wrath, whereby he terrifies and torments without intermission the damned in hell. As to them who are upon the earth, certain it is he is displeased with many, who, because they see not his angry face, regard it not, borne out with temporal recreations of the creature, which will fail them; and there are many, again, to whom he looks as a loving father in Christ, and yet they see not his merciful face by reason of many interjected veils; but to them who once have felt the sweetness of his favourable face it is death to want it. *William Cowper.*

**Verse 11.** *Cast me not away from thy presence.* Like the leper who is banished from society till cleansed, or as Saul was rejected from being king, because he obeyed not the word of the Lord. 1Sa 15:23. David could not but feel that his transgression would have deserved a similar rejection. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 11.** *Cast me not away.* Lord, though I, alas! have cast thee from me, yet cast me not away: hide not thy face from me, although I so often have refused to look at thee; leave me not without help, to perish in my sins, though I have aforetime left thee. *Fra Thomé de Jesu.*

**Verse 11.** *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.* The words of this verse imply that the Spirit had not altogether been taken away from him, however much his gifts had been temporarily obscured...Upon one point he had fallen into a deadly lethargy, but he was not "given over to a reprobate mind; "and it is scarcely conceivable that the rebuke of Nathan the prophet should have operated so easily and suddenly in arousing him had there been no latent spark of godliness still remaining...The truth on which we are now insisting is an important one, as many learned men have been inconsiderately drawn into the opinion that the elect, by falling into mortal sin, may lose the Spirit altogether, and be alienated from God. The contrary is clearly declared by Peter, who tells us that the word by which we are born again is an incorruptible seed 1Pe 1:23; and John is equally explicit in informing us that the elect are preserved from falling away altogether. 1Jo 3:9. However much they may appear for a time to have been cast off by God, it is afterwards seen that grace must have been alive in their breasts even during that interval when it seemed to be extinct. Nor is there any force in the objection that David speaks as if he feared that he might be deprived of the Spirit. It is natural that the saints, when they have fallen into sin, and have thus done what they could to expel the grace of God, should feel an anxiety upon this point; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth, that grace is the incorruptible seed of God, which never can perish in any heart where it has been deposited. This is the spirit displayed by David. Reflecting upon his offence, he is agitated with fears, and yet rests in the persuasion that, being a child of God, he would not be deprived of what, indeed, he had justly forfeited. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 12.** *Restore.* It is no small comfort to a man that hath lost his receipt for a debt paid when he remembers that the man he deals with is a good and just man, though his discharge is not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to deal with is very gracious; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore (the evidence of thy grace I mean). David begged this, and obtained it. Yea, saith faith, if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true, there is mercy enough in God's heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy if thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart; and so faith persuades the soul by an act of adventure to cast itself upon God in Christ. Wilt not thou, saith faith, expect to find as much mercy at God's hands, as thou canst look for at a man's? It is not beyond the line of created mercy to forgive many unkindnesses, much falseness and unfaithfulness, upon an humble, sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad but it abounds with parents who can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God's name. And so long as we have not lost sight of God's merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 12.** *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, etc.* How can God restore that which he took not away? For, can I charge God with the taking away the joy of his salvation from me? O gracious God, I charge not thee with taking it, but myself with losing it; and such is the miserable condition of us poor

wretches, that if thou shouldest restore no more to us than what thou takest from us, we should quickly be at a fault in our estates, and our ruin would be as sudden as inevitable. But what am I so earnest for restoring? for what good will restoring do me? and how shall I more keep it being restored, than I kept it before being enjoyed? and if I so enjoy it, as still to fear to lose it, what joy can there be in such enjoying? O therefore, not restore it only, but *establish me with thy free spirit*; that as by thy restoring I may enjoy it entirely, so by thy establishing I may enjoy it securely. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 12.** *Uphold me.* I am tempted to think that I am now an established Christian, that I have overcome this or that lust so long that I have got into the habit of the opposite grace, so that there is no fear; I may venture very near the temptation, nearer than other men. This is a lie of Satan. I might as well speak of gunpowder getting by habit a power of resisting fire, so as not to catch the spark. As long as powder is wet it resists the spark, but when it becomes dry it is ready to explode at the first touch. As long as the Spirit dwells in my heart, he deadens me to sin, so that if lawfully called through temptation I may reckon upon God carrying me through. But when the Spirit leaves me, I am like dry gunpowder. Oh, for a sense of this! *Robert Murray Macheyne.*

**Verse 12.** *Uphold me with thy free spirit.* A loving mother chooses a fitting place, and a fitting time, to let her little child fall; it is learning to walk, it is getting over confident, it may come to a dangerous place, and if possessed of all this confidence, may fall and destroy itself. So she permits it to fall at such a place, and in such a way as that it may be hurt, wholesomely hurt, but not dangerously so. It has now lost its confidence, and clings all the more fondly and trustingly to the strong hand that is able to hold up all its goings. So this David, this little child of the great God, has fallen; it is a sore fall, all his bones are broken, but it has been a precious and a profitable lesson to him; he has no confidence any longer in himself, his trust is not now in an arm of flesh. "Uphold me with thy free spirit." *Thomas Alexander.*

**Verse 12.** *(last clause).* *Let a free spirit sustain me;* that is, let me not be enslaved, as I have been, by my sinful passions. *Henry Dimock, M.A., 1791.*

**Verse 13.** *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways,* etc. We see our duty craves that when we have received mercy from God for ourselves, we should make vantage of it for the edification of others. Every talent received from God should be put to profit, but specially the talent of mercy; as it is greatest, so the Lord requires greater fruit of it, for his own glory, and for the edification of our brethren. Seeing we are vessels of mercy, should not the scent and sweet odour of mercy go from us to others? This duty Christ craved from Peter: "And thou, when thou art converted, confirm thy brethren." And this duty, as David here promises, so we may read how he did perform it: "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." The property of a Christian is, *fides per delectionem efficax*, faith worked by love. What availeth it to pretend faith toward God,

where there is no love toward thy neighbour? and wherein can thy love be declared more than in this, to draw thy neighbour to the participation of that same merit whereunto God hath called thee? By the law a man was bound to bring home his neighbour's wandering beast if he had met with it before; how much more, then, to turn again his neighbour himself when he wanders from the Lord his God? If two men walking on the way should both fall into one pit, and the one being relieved out of it should go his way and forget his neighbour, might it not justly be called a barbarous and inhuman cruelty? We have all fallen into one and the same mire of iniquity; since the Lord hath put out his merciful hand to draw us out of this prison of sin, shall we refuse to put out our hand to see if possibly we may draw up our brethren with us? *William Cowper (Bishop)*.

**Verse 14.** (*first clause*). *Deliver me from bloods*. The term *bloods* in Hebrew may denote any capital crime; and in my opinion he is here to be considered as alluding to the sentence of death, to which he felt himself to be obnoxious, and from which he requests deliverance. *John Calvin*.

**Verse 14.** (*first clause*). The Chaldee reads, *Deliver me from the judgment of murder*.

**Verse 14.** *O God, thou God of my salvation*. *O God*, is a good invocation, for he heareth prayers. Yet to distinguish him from all false gods he is so particular as to single him from all other: *Thou God*. And to magnify him, and to reenforce his petition, he calleth him *Deum salutis*, "*the God of my salvation*," which expresses him able to deliver him; for it is his nature, and his love, and his glory, to be a preserver of men. And to bring home this joy and comfort into his own heart, he addeth, *salutis meae*, "*of my salvation*." So it is *oratio fervens*, and the apostle telleth us that such a prayer prevaieth much with God. For God may be a Saviour and a deliverer, and yet we may escape his saving hand, his right hand may skip us. We can have no comfort in the favours of God, except we can apply them at home; rather we may "think on God and be troubled." *Samuel Page*.

**Verse 14.** *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*. Hierom, Basil, Euthymius, and other ancient doctors observe that natural corruptions and actual sins are the very rampiers which stop the free passage of song Ps 51:15. So David doth himself expound himself: *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*. His lack of thankfulness did cry, his adultery cry, his murder cry unto the Lord for revenge; but alas! himself was mute, till God in exceeding great mercy did stop the mouths of his clamorous adversaries, and gave him leave to speak. *John Boys*.

**Verse 14.** *Aloud*. This for God, for himself, for the church. 1. *For God*, that his honour may be proclaimed, therefore they borrowed the voice of still and loud instruments...2. *For himself*. Having received such a benefit, he cannot contain himself, this new wine of spiritual joy which filleth his vessel must have a vent. All passions are loud. Anger chides loud, sorrow cries loud, fear shrieks loud, and joy sings loud. So he expresses the vehemency of his affection; for to whom much is forgiven, they love much. 3. *For others*. Iron sharpens iron—examples of zeal and devotion affect

much, and therefore solemn and public assemblies do generally tender the best service to God, because one provoketh another. *Samuel Page.*

**Verse 15.** *O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* As man is a little world in the great, so the tongue is a great world in the little. *Nihil habet medium; aut grande malum est, aut grande bonum.* (Jerome.) It has no mean; it is either a great evil, or a great good. If good (as Eunapius said of that famous rhetorician) *a walking library*, a whole university of edifying knowledge; but if bad (as St. James doth tell us, Jas 3:6), "*a world of wickedness.*" No better dish for God's public service, when it is we; seasoned; again, none worse, when ill handled. So that if we desire to be doorkeepers in God's house, let us entreat God first to be a doorkeeper in our house, that he would shut the wicket of our mouth against unsavoury speeches, and open the door of our lips, *that our mouth may shew forth his praise.* This was David's prayer, and ought to be thy practice, wherein observe three points especially: who, *the Lord*; what, *open my lips*; why, *that my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* For the first—man of himself cannot untie the strings of his own stammering tongue, but it is God only which opened "a door of utterance." Col 4:3. When we have a good thought, it is (as the school doth speak) *gratia infusa*; when a good word, *gratia effusa*; when a good work, *gratia diffusa*. Man is a lock, the Spirit of God has a key, "which openeth and no man shutteth; "again, "shutteth and no man openeth." Re 3:7. He did open the heart of Lydia to conceive well, the ears of the prophet to hear well, the eyes of Elisha servant to see well, and here the lips of David to speak well. Ac 16:1-40 Isa 50:1-11 2Ki 6:1-33. And therefore, whereas in the former verse he might seem too peremptory, saying, *My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness*; he doth, as it were, correct himself by this later edition and second speech: *O Lord, I find myself most unable to sing or say, but open thou my lips*, and touch thou my tongue, and then I am sure *my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* *John Boys.*

**Verse 15.** *O Lord, open thou my lips*, etc. Again he seems to have the case of the leper before his mind, with the upper lip covered, and only crying unclean, unclean; and he prays as a spiritual leper to be enabled, with freedom and fulness, to publish abroad the praise of his God. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 15.** (*first clause*). He prays that *his lips may be opened*; in other words, that God would afford him matter of praise. The meaning, usually attached to the expression is, that God would so direct his tongue by the Spirit as to fit him for singing his praises. But though it is true that God must supply us with words, and that if he do not, we cannot fail to be silent in his praise, David seems rather to intimate that his mouth must be shut until God called him to the exercise of thanksgiving by extending pardon. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 16.** *For thou desirest not sacrifice*; etc. There may be another reason why David here affirms that God would not accept of a sacrifice, nor be pleased with a burnt offering. No particular sacrifices were appointed by the law of Moses to expiate the guilt of murder and adultery. The person who had

perpetrated these crimes was, according to the divine law, to be punished with death. David therefore may be understood as declaring, that it was utterly vain for him to think of resorting to sacrifices and burnt offerings with a view to the expiation of his guilt; that his criminality was of such a character, that the ceremonial law made no provision for his deliverance from the doom which his deeds of horror deserved; and that the only sacrifices which would avail were those mentioned in the succeeding verse, "*The sacrifice of a broken heart.*" *John Calvin.*

**Verse 16.** *Else would I give it thee.* And good reason it is, that we who lie daily at the beautiful gate of the temple begging alms of him, and receiving from his open hand, who openeth his hand, and filleth with his plenty every living thing, should not think much to return to him such offerings of our goods as his law requireth. *Samuel Page.*

**Verses 16-17.** And now I was thinking what were fit *to offer to God* for all his lovingkindness he has showed me; and I thought upon *sacrifices*, for they have sometimes been pleasing to him, and he hath oftentimes smelt a sweet odour from them; but I considered that sacrifices were but shadows of things to come, are not now in that grace they have been; for *old things are past, and new are now come*; the shadows are gone, the substances are come in place. The bullocks that are to be sacrificed now are our hearts; it were easier for me to give him bullocks for sacrifice, than to give him my heart. But why should I offer him that he care not for? my heart, I know, he cares for; and if it be broken, and offered up by penitence and contrition, it is the only sacrifice that now he delights in. But can we think God to be so indifferent that he will accept of a broken heart? Is a thing that is broken good for anything? Can we drink in a broken glass? Or can we lean upon a broken staff? But though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken; for till it be broken we cannot see what is in it; till it be broken, it cannot send forth its sweetest odour; and therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet he loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, indeed, seeing it is himself that breaks it; for as nothing but goat's blood can break the adamant, so nothing but the blood of our scapegoat, Jesus Christ, is able to break our adamantine hearts. Therefore, accept, O God, my broken heart, which I offer thee with a whole heart; seeing thou canst neither except against it for being whole, which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against it for being broken, which is whole in affection. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 17.** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart,* etc. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, "*a joyful heart, or a thankful heart,*" but instead of that he says, "*a contrite heart.*" For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin: this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart, is therefore the best thank offering. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 17.** It may be observed that the second word, (xkbn) which we render *contrite*, denotes the

being bruised and broken to pieces, as a thing is bruised in a mortar (See Nu 11:8), and therefore, in a moral sense, signifies such a weight of sorrow as must wholly crush the mind without some powerful and seasonable relief. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 18.** *In thy good pleasure.* Whatever we seek must ever be sought under this restriction, *Thy good pleasure.* Build thou, but do it in thine own wise time, in thine own good way. Build thou the walls of separation that divide the church from the world; let them be *in* it, not *of* it; keep them from its evil. Build thou the walls that bind, that unite thy people into one city, under one polity, that they all may be one. Build thou, and raze thou; raze all the inner walls that divide thy people from thy people; hasten that day when, as there is but one Shepherd, so shall there be but one sheepfold. *Thomas Alexander.*

**Verses 18-19.** Some few learned Jewish interpreters, while they assign the Psalm to the occasion mentioned in the title, conjecture that the 18th and 19th verses were added by some Jewish bard, in the time of the Babylonish captivity. This opinion is also held by Venema, Green, Street, French and Skinner. There does not, however, seem to be any sufficient ground for referring the poem, either in whole or part, to that period. Neither the walls of Jerusalem, nor the buildings of Zion, as the royal palace and the magnificent structure of the temple, which we know David had already contemplated for the worship of God (2Sa 7:1, etc.), were completed during his reign. This was only effected under the reign of his son Solomon. 1Ki 3:1.

The prayer, then, in the 18th verse might have a particular reference to the completion of these buildings, and especially to the rearing of the temple, in which sacrifices of unprecedented magnitude were to be offered. David's fears might easily suggest to him that his crimes might prevent the building of the temple, which God had promised should be erected. 2Sa 7:13. "The king forgets not," observes Bishop Horne, "to ask mercy for his people as well as for himself; that so neither his own nor their sins might prevent either the building and flourishing of the earthly Jerusalem, or, what was of infinitely greater importance, the promised blessing of Messiah, who was to descend from him, and to rear the walls of the New Jerusalem." *James Anderson's Note to Calvin, in loc.*

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#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

The Psalm is upon its surface so full of suggestions for sermons that I have not attempted to offer any of my own, but have merely inserted a selection from Mr. G. Rogers and others.

**Verse 1.**

1. The Prayer.

(a) For mercy, not justice. Mercy is the sinner's attribute—as much a part of the divine nature as justice. The possibility of sin is implied in its existence. The actual commission of sin is implied in its display.

(b) For pardon, not pity merely, but forgiveness.

2. The plea.

(a) For the pardon of great sins on account of great mercies, and lovingkindness.

(b) Many sins on account of multitude of mercies.

3. Hell deserving sins on account of tender mercies. We who have sinned are human, he who pardons is divine.

"Great God, thy *nature* hath no bound,

So let thy pardoning love be found."

**Verse 3.**

1. Confession. "I acknowledge," etc.

2. Humiliation, not a mere confession with the lips, but ever before me—in its guilt—defilement—consequences in this life and hereafter.

**Verses 3-4, 11-12, 17.**

1. Scripture estimate of sin.

(a) Personal accountability—*My sin*.

(b) Estimated as hateful to God—*Against thee*, etc.

(c) Sin estimated as separation from God.

2. Spiritual restoration. First step—Sacrifice of a broken spirit. Last step—Spirit of liberty. *Thy free spirit*. F. W. Robertson.

**Verse 6.** See T. Goodwin's Treatise, entitled, "An Unregenerate Man's Guiltiness before God, in respect of Sin and Punishment." Book 9 cap. 1-2. (Nichol's edition, Vol. X., p. 324 *et seq.*)

**Verse 7.** Here is,

1. Faith in the act of an atonement for sin. "I shall be clean."

2. Faith in the method of its application. "Purge me," etc. Sprinkled as the blood of sacrifices.

3. Faith in its efficacy. "I shall be whiter," etc.

**Verse 10.**

1. The change to be effected.

(a) A clean heart.

(b) A right spirit.

2. The power by which it is accomplished.

(a) A creative power, such as created the world at first.

(b) A renewing power, such as continually renews the face of the earth.

(c) The acquirement of these blessings. The prayer, "Create," etc.

**Verses 12-13.** A threefold desire.

1. To be *happy*—"Restore," etc.

2. To be *consistent*—"Uphold," etc.
3. To be *useful*—"Then will I teach," etc. —*W. Jackson*.

**Verse 13.**

1. It is not our duty to seek the conversion of others until we are converted ourselves.
2. The greater enjoyment we have in the ways of God, the more faithfully and earnestly we shall make them known to others.
3. The more faithfully and earnestly we make them known to others the more they will be influenced by them.

**Verse 15.**

1. Confession. His lips are sealed on account—
  - (a) Of his fall—and well they might be.
  - (b) Of natural timidity.
  - (c) Of want of zeal.
2. Petition, "Open thou, "etc. Not my understanding merely and heart, but "lips."
3. Resolution. Then he would speak freely in God's praise.

**Verse 15.**

1. When God does not open our lips we had better keep them closed.
2. When he does open them we ought not to close them.
3. When he opens them it is not to speak in our own praise, and seldom in praise of others, but always in his own praise.
4. We should use this prayer whenever we are about to speak in his name. "O Lord, open, "etc.

**Verses 16-17.**

1. Men would gladly do something towards their own salvation if they could. "Thou desirest not, "etc., else would I give it.
2. All that they can do is not of the least avail. All the ceremonial observances of Jewish or Gentile churches could not procure pardon for the least transgression of the moral law.
3. The only offering of man which God will not despise is a broken and a contrite heart.
4. All other requirement for his salvation God himself will provide.

**Verse 18.**

1. For whom is the prayer offered—for the church or Zion?
  - (a) Next to our own welfare we should seek the welfare of Zion.
  - (b) All should seek it by prayer.
2. For what is the prayer offered?
  - (a) The kind of good, not worldly or ecclesiastical, but spiritual.
  - (b) The measure of good. "In thy good pleasure." Thine own love to it, and what thou hast already

done for it.

(c) The continuance of good. "Build, "etc. Its doctrines, graces, zeal.

**Verse 19.**

1. When we are accepted of God our offerings are accepted." Then," etc.

2. We should then make the richest offerings in our power, our time, talents, influence, etc.

(a) Holy obedience.

(b) Self sacrifices, not half offerings, but whole "burnt offerings; "not lambs merely, but "bullocks."

(c) Zeal for divine ordinances. "Upon thine altar."

3. God will take pleasure in such services. "Then shalt thou be pleased."

1. Because from his own redeemed.

2. Because given in the name of the Redeemer. With such sacrifices God is well pleased.

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**WORKS UPON THE FIFTY-FIRST PSALM**

Exposition of the Fifty-first Psalm, by MARTIN LUTHER, in "Select works of Martin Luther, translated by REV. HENRY COLE." Vol. I., pp. 51-197.

"An Exposition upon the 51 Psalm, "in "*Certain Godly and learned Expositions upon divers parts of Scripture. As they were preached and afterwards more briefly penned by that worthy man of God, Maister GEORGE ESTEY...Late preacher of the word of God in St. Edmund's Burie.*" 1603. (4to.)

"David's Penitential Psalm opened: in thirtie severall Lectures *thereon.* By SAM. HIERON. 1617." (4to.)

"Good News from Canaan; or, An Exposition on the 51 Psalm, "in "The Workes of Mr. William Cowper, late Bishop of Galloway." 1629. (Folio.)

"David's Repentance; or, A plaine and familiar Exposition of the *LI. Psalm:* first preached, and now published for the benefit of God's church. Wherein euey faithful Christian may set before his eyes the Patterne of vnfeigned Repentance, whereby we may take heed of the falling into sin again. The eighth edition, newly revised and profitably amplified by the author, SAMVEL SMITH, preacher of the word of God at Prittlewell in Essex...1630." (12mo.)

"A Godly and Fruitful Exposition of the Fifty-one Psalm, the fifth *of the Penitential,* "in ARCHIBALD SYMSON'S "Sacred Septenarie." 1638.

"Meditations and Disquisitions upon the 51 Psalm of David, "in "*Meditations and Disquisitions upon the seven Psalms of David, commonly called the Penitential Psalmes.*" By SIR RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1639.

"CLII. Lectures upon Psalm LI. Preached at Ashby Delazovch, in Leicester Shire. By the late faithful, and worthy Minister of Jesus Christ, Mr. ARTHUR HILDERSAM. 1642." (Folio.)

"An Exposition of the one-and-fiftieth Psalm, "in pp. 51-239, of "Sermons with some religious and

divine Meditations. By the Right Reverend Father in God, ARTHVRE LAKE, late Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells." 1639. (Folio.)

"David's Broken Heart; or, an Exposition upon the whole Fifty-one *Psalm*. By that Reverend divine Doctor SAMUEL PAGE, late Pastour of Deptford Stroud, in Kent...1646." (4to.)

Exposition of Psalm LI., in "Chandler's Life of David." Vol. 2 pg 254-273.

"The Portraiture of the Christian Penitent: attempted in a course of *Sermons upon Psalm LI* ...By the Rev. CHA. DE COETLOGON, A.M. 1775."

"Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, delivered in the Parish Church of *St. James', Bristol*. By the Rev. THOMAS T. BIDDULPH, A.M. 1835."

"The Penitent's Prayer: a Practical Exposition of the Fifty-first *Psalm*. By the Rev. THOMAS ALEXANDER, M.A., Chelsea."

## **Psalm 52**

### Exposition

### Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

### Hints to the Village Preacher

### Other Works

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**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician.* Even short Psalms, if they record but one instance of the goodness of the Lord, and rebuke but briefly the pride of man, are worthy of our best minstrelsy. When we see that each Psalm is dedicated to "the chief musician," it should make us value our psalmody, and forbid us to praise the Lord carelessly. *Maschil.* An Instructive. Even the malice of a Doeg may furnish instruction to a David. *A Psalm of David.* He was the prime object of Doeg's doggish hatred, and therefore the most fitting person to draw from the incident the lesson concealed within it. *When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and saith unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.* By this deceitful tale bearing, he procured the death of all the priests at Nob: though it had been a crime to have succoured David as a rebel, they were not in their intent and knowledge guilty of the fault. David felt much the villany of this arch enemy, and here he denounces him in vigorous terms; it may be also that he has Saul in his eye.

**DIVISION.** We shall follow the sacred pauses marked by the Selahs of the poet.

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## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Why boasteth thyself in mischief, O mighty man?* Doeg had small matter for boasting in having procured the slaughter of a band of defenceless priests. A mighty man indeed to kill men who never touched a sword! He ought to have been ashamed of his cowardice. He had no room for

exultation! Honourable titles are but irony where the wearer is mean and cruel. If David alluded to Saul, he meant by these words pityingly to say, "How can one by nature fitted for nobler deeds, descend to so low a level as to find a theme for boasting in a slaughter so heartless and mischievous?" *The goodness of God endureth continually.* A beautiful contrast. The tyrant's fury cannot dry up the perennial stream of divine mercy. If priests be slain their Master lives. If Doeg for awhile triumphs the Lord will outlive him, and right the wrongs which he has done. This ought to modify the proud exultations of the wicked, for after all, while the Lord liveth, iniquity has little cause to exalt itself.

**Verse 2.** *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs.* Thou speakest with an ulterior design. The information given was for Saul's assistance apparently, but in very deed in his heart the Edomite hated the priests of the God of Jacob. It is a mark of deep depravity, when the evil spoken is craftily intended to promote a yet greater evil. *Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.* David represents the false tongue as being effectual for mischief, like a razor which, unawares to the person operated on, is making him bald; so softly and deftly do Oriental barbers perform their work. Or he may mean that as with a razor a man's throat may be cut very speedily, under the pretence of shaving him, even thus keenly, basely, but effectually Doeg destroyed the band of the priests. Whetted by malice, and guided by craft, he did his cruel work with accursed thoroughness.

**Verse 3.** *Thou lovest evil more than good.* He loved not good at all. If both had been equally profitable and pleasant, he would have preferred evil. *And lying rather than to speak righteousness.* He was more at home at lying than at truth. He spake not the truth except by accident, but he delighted heartily in falsehood. *SELAH.* Let us pause and look at the proud blustering liar. Doeg is gone, but other dogs bark at the Lord's people. Saul's cattle master is buried, but the devil still has his drovers, who fain would hurry the saints like sheep to the slaughter.

**Verse 4.** *Thou lovest.* Thou hast a taste, a gusto for evil language. *All devouring words.* There are words that, like boa constrictors, swallow men whole, or like lions, rend men to pieces; these words evil minds are fond of. Their oratory is evermore furious and bloody. That which will most readily provoke the lowest passions they are sure to employ, and they think such pandering to the madness of the wicked to be eloquence of a high order. *O thou deceitful tongue.* Men can manage to say a great many furious things, and yet cover all over with the pretext of justice. They claim that they are jealous for the right, but the truth is they are determined to put down truth and holiness, and craftily go about it under this transparent pretence.

**Verse 5.** *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever.* Fain would the persecutor destroy the church, and therefore God shall destroy him, pull down his house, pluck up his roots, and make an end of him. *He shall take thee away.* God shall extinguish his coal and sweep him away like the ashes of the hearth; he would have quenched the truth, and God shall quench him. *And pluck thee out of thy dwelling*

place, like a plant torn from the place where it grew, or a captive dragged from his home. Ahimelech and his brother priests were cut off from their abode, and so should those be who compassed and contrived their murder. *And root thee out of the land of the living.* The persecutor shall be eradicated, stubbed up by the root, cut up root and branch. He sought the death of others and death shall fall upon him. He troubled the land of the living, and he shall be banished to that land where the wicked cease from troubling. Those who will not "let live" have no right to "live." God will turn the tables on malicious men, and mete to them a portion with their own measure. "SELAH." Pause again, and behold the divine justice proving itself more than a match for human sin.

**Verse 6.** *The righteous*—the object of the tyrant's hatred—shall outlive his enmity, and *also shall see*, before his own face, the end of the ungodly oppressor. God permits Mordecai to see Haman hanging on the gallows. David had brought to him the tokens of Saul's death on Gilboa. *And fear.* Holy awe shall sober the mind of the good man; he shall reverently adore the God of providence. *And shall laugh at him.* If not with righteous joy, yet with solemn contempt. Schemes so far reaching all baffled, plans so deep, so politic, all thwarted. Mephistopheles outwitted, the old serpent taken in his own subtlety. This is a good theme for that deep seated laughter which is more akin to solemnity than merriment.

**Verse 7.** *Lo.* Look ye here, and read the epitaph of a mighty man, who lorded it proudly during his little hour, and set his heel upon the necks of the Lord's chosen. *This is the man that made not God his strength.* Behold the man! The great vainglorious man. He found a fortress, but not in God; he gloried in his might, but not in the Almighty. Where is he now? How has it fared with him in the hour of his need? Behold his ruin, and be instructed. *But trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.* The substance he had gathered, and the mischiefs he had wrought, were his boast and glory. Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed. Beelzebub and Mammon together heat the furnace seven times hotter for the child of God, but in the end that shall work out their own destruction. Wherever we see today a man great in sin and substance, we shall do well to anticipate his end, and view this verse as the divine *in memoriam*.

**Verse 8.** *But I, hunted and persecuted though I am, am like a green olive tree.* I am not plucked up or destroyed, but am like a flourishing olive, which out of the rock draws oil, and amid the drought still lives and grows. *In the house of God.* He was one of the divine family, and could not be expelled from it; his place was near his God, and there was he safe and happy, despite all the machinations of his foes. He was bearing fruit, and would continue to do so when all his proud enemies were withered like branches lopped from the tree. *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.* Eternal mercy is my present confidence. David knew God's mercy to be eternal and perpetual, and in that he trusted. What a rock to build on! What a fortress to fly to!

**Verse 9.** *I will praise thee for ever.* Like thy mercy shall my thankfulness be. While others boast in their riches I will boast in my God; and when their glorying is silenced for ever in the tomb, my song shall continue to proclaim the lovingkindness of Jehovah. *Because thou hast done it.* Thou hast vindicated the righteous, and punished the wicked. God's memorable acts of providence, both to saints and sinners, deserve, and must have our gratitude. David views his prayer as already answered, the promise of God as already fulfilled, and therefore at once lifts up the sacred Psalm. *And I will wait on thy name.* God shall still be the psalmist's hope; he will not in future look elsewhere. He whose name has been so gloriously made known in truth and righteousness, is justly chosen as our expectation for years to come. *For it is good before thy saints.* Before or among the saints David intended to wait, feeling it to be good both for him and them to look to the Lord alone, and wait for the manifestation of his character in due season. Men must not too much fluster us; our strength is to sit still. Let the mighty ones boast, we will wait on the Lord; and if their haste brings them present honour, our patience will have its turn by and by, and bring us the honour which excelleth.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** That *Maschil* means a sacred composition, is evident from Ps 47:7, where the passage which we render, "Sing ye praises with understanding," is literally, "Sing ye a *Maschil*, "or song of instruction. This word occurs as a title in thirteen places; and six times is prefixed to compositions of David's. In several instances it occurs in consecutive Psalms; *i.e.*, in the 42nd (of which the 43rd is the sequel), the 44th and 45th, the 52nd, 53rd, 54th, and 55th, the 88th and 89th. A circumstance which favours the notion that the term was one peculiarly used by some particular editor or collector of a certain portion of the Psalter. *John Jebb.*

**Verse 1.** (*first clause*). *Why doth he glory in malice that is mighty?* that is, he that in malice is mighty, why doth he glory? There is need that a man be mighty, but in goodness, not in malice. Is it any great thing to glory in malice? To build a house belong to few men, any ignorant man you please can pull down. To sow wheat, to dress the crop, to wait until it ripen, and in that fruit on which one has laboured to rejoice, doth belong to few men: with one spark any man you please can burn all the crop. . . . What art thou about to do, O, mighty man, what are thou about to do, boasting thyself much? Thou art about to kill a man: this thing also a scorpion, this also a fever, this also a poisonous fungus can do. To this is thy mightiness reduced, that it be made equal to a poisonous fungus! *Augustine.*

**Verse 1.** By *mischief* is understood not simply what evil he had done, but the prosperity which he now enjoyed, obtained through mischief; as is clear both from the word *boasting* and from the seventh verse...Formerly he was the chief of Saul's shepherds 1Sa 21:8, but by that wicked destruction of the priests of God by Saul, and the execution of the cruel sentence, he obtained the

chief place near to the king 1Sa 22:9. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 1.** *O mighty man.* These words may be added by way of irony, as if he had said, A great deal of valour and prowess you have shown in slaying a company of unarmed men, the priests of the Lord, yea, women and children, no way able to resist you or else to imply the ground of his vain boasting, to wit, either his present greatness, as being a man in great place, and of great power with Saul; or the great preferments he expected from Saul. *Arthur Jackson.*

**Verse 1.** *The goodness of God endureth continually.* He contrasts the *goodness* of God with the wealth and might of Doeg, and the foundation of his own confidence as widely different from that of Doeg, his own placed upon the goodness of God, enduring for ever and showing itself effectual. It is as if he had said, The *goodness* of God to which I trust, is most powerful and the same throughout all time, and in it I shall at all times most surely rejoice that *goodness* of God, since now it sustains me, so it will exalt me in its own good time; it therefore *is*, and *will be above me*. . . . Not without emphasis does he say the goodness *la of the strong God*, a contrast to Doeg the *hero*, and the ruinous foundation of his fortune. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 2.** *Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.* Thus our version. But I do not very well understand the propriety of *the tongue's devising mischief*, and devising it *like a sharp razor*. But we may easily avoid this harsh comparison by rendering the words: *You contrive mischiefs with thy tongue, as with a sharp razor, O thou dealer in deceit: i.e., you contrive with thy smooth and flattering tongue to wound the reputation and character of others, as though thou wast cutting their throats with a smooth razor.* *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 2.** *Like a sharp razor*, that instead of shaving the hair lances the flesh; or missing the beard cutteth the throat. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 2.** The smooth adroit manner of executing a wicked device neither hides not abates its wickedness. Murder with a *sharp razor* is as wicked as murder with a meat axe or bludgeon. A lie very ingeniously framed and rehearsed in an oily manner, is as great a sin, and in the end will be seen to be as great a folly as the most bungling attempt at deception. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 3.** *Thou lovest evil more than good.—Thou hast loved evil*, he says, *more than good*, not by simply preferring it, but by substituting it; so that in the stead of good he hath done evil, and that from the inmost love of his soul, bent upon evil; wherefore he does not say that he *admitted*, but *loved* evil, not *moral* only, but *physical*, for the destruction of his neighbours; so *to have loved* it, that he willed nothing but *evil*, being averse to all good. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 4.** *Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.* He was all *tongue*; a man of words; and these the most deceitful and injurious. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 5.** *God shall destroy thee forever*, etc. There are four words the psalmist makes us of to denote the utter vengeance that awaited this deceitful and bloody wretch, all of them having a very

strong meaning. The first, *ksty* from *stn*, signifies *to pull down*, and break utterly into pieces; as when an altar is demolished. (Jud 6:30 8:9.) The second, *kth* from the root *hrh*, which signifies *to twist* anything, or *pluck it up by twisting it round*, as trees are sometimes twisted up. The third, *khmy* from *hmg*, which properly signifies *utterly to sweep away anything like dust or chaff*; and the expression *lhm khm* means not *sweep thee away from thy tent*, but *sweep thee away, that thou mayest be no longer a tent*; thyself, thy family, thy fortune, shall be wholly and entirely swept away, and dissipated forever; to which the fourth word, *ksrs*, answers, *eradicabit te*, he shall root thee out *from the land of the living*. It is impossible words can express a more entire and absolute destruction. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 5.** *God shall likewise destroy thee forever.* Here are *quot verba tot tonotrua*, so many words, so many thunderclaps. As thou hast destroyed the Lord's priests, and their whole city, razing and harassing it; so God will demolish and destroy thee utterly, as an house pulled down to the ground, so that one stone is not left upon another (Le 14:45); so shall God pull down Doeg from that high preferment, which he by sycophancy hath got at court. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 5.** Wonderful is the force of the verbs in the original, which convey to us the four ideas of *laying prostrate*, *dissolving as by fire*, *sweeping away as with a besom*, and *totally extirpating root and branch*, as a tree is eradicated from the spot on which it grew. If a farther comment be wanted, it may be found in the history of David's enemies, and the crucifiers of the son of David; but the passage will be fully and finally explained by the destruction of the world of the ungodly at the last day. *George Horne.*

**Verse 5.** The poet accumulates dire and heavy words, and mingles various metaphors that he might paint the picture of this man's destruction in more lively colours. Three metaphors appear to be joined together, the first taken from a *building*, the second from a *tent*, the third from a *tree*, if attention is given to the force and common acceptation of the words. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 5.** *He shall take thee away*; or, *seize thee*, as coals are taken with the tongs. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 6.** *The righteous also shall see*, etc. That is, to use the apt words of Gejerus, "*This shall not be a secret judgment, or known only to a few, but common fame shall spread abroad throughout the kingdom, or city, the notable punishments of the ungodly. The righteous also shall not pass by such an event with indifference, but with earnest eyes shall contemplate it*," etc. I add, and hence shall they take joy, and turn it to their own use, to the greater fearing of God... *The righteous*, upon whose destruction the ungodly man was intent, shall survive and spend their lives safe in the favour of God; *they shall see* with attentive mind, they shall consider; nor, as worldlings are accustomed, shall they pass it by without reflection or improvement, they shall see and *fear*, namely, God the just judge; and instructed in his judgment by this instance, they shall be the more careful to abstain from all designs

and crimes of this kind. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 6.** *And shall laugh at him; or, over him—over the wicked man thus cast down—they shall laugh.* Such exultation, to our modern sensibilities, seems shocking, because we can hardly conceive of it, apart from the gratification of personal vindictiveness. But there is such a thing as a righteous hatred, as a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor, at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 7.** *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength.* David having showed (Ps 52:5-6) the wicked man, by the righteous judgment of God rooted out of the land of the living, shows us in the next verse, the righteous man at once fearing and laughing at this sight, as also pointing at him saying, *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength.* The words are a divine but cutting sarcasm. The original is *geber*, which signifieth a strong, valiant man: as we say in English, *Lo, this is the brave and gallant man you wot of!* But who was this for a man? He was one, saith he, that *trusted in the abundance of his riches.* Oh! It is hard to abound in riches and not to trust in them. Hence that caution (Ps 62:10): *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.* Now, what is the setting the heart upon riches but our rejoicing and trusting in them? And because the heart of man is so easily persuaded into this sinful trust upon riches, therefore the apostle is urgent with Timothy to persuade all rich men—not only mere worldly rich men, but godly rich men—against it; yea, he urges Timothy to persuade rich men against two sins, which are worse than all the poverty in the world, yet the usual attendants of riches—pride and confidence: *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded.* 1Ti 6:17. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verses 7-8.** Perhaps some of you have been long professors, and yet come to little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly mindedness, mortification; and it is worth the digging to see what lies at the root of your profession, whether there be not a legal principle that hath too much influenced you. Have you not thought to carry all with God from your duties and services, and too much laid up your hopes in your own actings? Alas! this is as so much dead earth, which must be thrown out, and gospel principles laid in the room thereof. Try but this course, and try whether the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish when some that were rich and mighty, on a sudden withered and came to nothing. *Lo, saith he, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.* While others trust in the riches of their own righteousness and services, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust in the mercy of God in Christ, and thou shalt be like a green olive when they fade and wither. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 8.** *(first clause):*

"But I am olive charged with fruit  
In fertile soil that grows."

This appears to express of the Hebrew words, which our translators render, *like a green olive tree*, but which in reality have no reference to the colour, but to the flourishing, vigorous, and thriving state of the plant; just as Homer gives it the epithet of "luxuriant," and "flourishing;" and Ovid that of "ever flourishing." The fact is, the colour of the leaves of this tree is not a bright lively green; but a dark, disagreeable, or yellowish one. Scheuchzer describes the leaves, as "*superne coloris atrovirentis, vel in viridi flavescentis.*" An English traveller, writing from Italy, thus expresses his disappointment about the olive tree:—"The fields, and indeed the whole face of Tuscany, are in a manner covered with olive trees; but the olive tree does not answer the character I have conceived of it. The royal psalmist and some of the sacred writers, speak with rapture of the `green olive tree, 'so that I expected a beautiful green; and I confess to you, I was wretchedly disappointed to find its hue resembling that of our hedges when they are covered with dust." I have heard other travellers express the same feeling of disappointment. "The true way of solving the difficulty, "as Harmer properly remarks, "is to consider the word translated `green, 'not as descriptive of colour, but of some other property; youthfulness, vigour, prosperity, or the like." *Richard Mant.*

**Verse 8.** *Green olive tree in the house of God.* Several expositors fancifully imagine that olive trees grow in certain of the courts of the Tabernacle; but the notion must not be endured, it would have been too near an approach to the groves of the heathen to have been tolerated, at least in David's time. The text should surely be read with some discretion; the poet does not refer to olive trees in God's house, but compares *himself in the house of God* to an olive tree. This reminds us of the passage, "Thy children like olive plants around thy table, "where some whose imaginations have been more lively than their judgments, have seen a table surrounded, not with children, but with olive plants. Whoever, in the realms of common sense, ever heard of olive plants round a table? If, as Thrupp supposes, Nob was situated upon the Mount of Olives, we can, without any conjecture, see a reason for the present reference to a flourishing olive tree. *C. H. S.*

**Verse 9.** He compares himself

1. With an *olive tree*, a tree a ways green, lasting long and fruitful, whose fruit is most useful and grateful: so he paints his future state as joyful, glorious, lasting, and useful and pleasing to men: plainly a reference is made to the *royal* and prophetic office, in both of which he represents himself as an *olive tree*, by supplying others with oil through his rule and instruction:

2. With *the olive* growing luxuriantly, and abounding in spreading bough, and so, spacious and large...

3. But why does he add *in the house of God*? That he might indicate, unless I am deceived:

(a) That he should possess a dwelling in that place where the *house of God* was, whence he was

now exiled through the calumnies of Doeg and the attacks of Saul stirred up thereby:

(b) That he should perform distinguished service to the house of God, by adorning it, and by restoring religion, now neglected, and practising it with zeal:

(c) That he should derive from God and his favour, whose that house was, all his prosperity:

(d) That he, like a son of God, should rejoice in familiarity with him, and should become heir to his possessions and promises. *Hermann Venema*.

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#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** The confidence of faith.

1. *The circumstances were distressing.*

(a) David was misjudged.

(b) David exiled.

(c) A bad man in power.

(d) God's priests slain.

2. *The consolation was abiding.*

(a) There is a God.

(b) He is good.

(c) His goodness continues.

(d) Good will therefore overcome.

3. *The rejoinder was triumphant. Why boasteth thou?*

(a) The mischief did not touch the main point.

(b) It would be overruled.

(c) It would recoil.

(d) It would expose the perpetrators to scorn.

**Verse 3.** In what cases men clearly love evil more than good.

**Verses 7-8.** The worldling like an uprooted tree, the believer a vigorous well planted olive.

**Verse 8.** The believer's character, position, confidence, and continuance.

**Verse 9.** The double duty, and the double reason: the single heart and its single object.

**Verse 9.** What God has done, what we will do, and why.

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#### WORK UPON THE FIFTY-SECOND PSALM

CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* contains an Exposition of this Psalm. Vol. 1., pp. 140-143.

#### **Psalm 53**

Exposition

## Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

### Hints to the Village Preacher

**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician.* If the leader of the choir is privileged to sing the jubilates of divine grace, he must not disdain to chant the miseries of human depravity. This is the second time he has had the same Psalm entrusted to him (*see Psalm 14.*), and he must, therefore, be the more careful in singing it. *Upon Mahalath.* Here the tune is chosen for the musician, probably some mournfully solemn air; or perhaps a musical instrument is here indicated, and the master of the choir is requested to make it the prominent instrument in the orchestra; at any rate, this is a direction not found in the former copy of the Psalm, and seems to call for greater care. The word "*Mahalath*" appears to signify, in some forms of it, "disease," and truly this Psalm is *THE SONG OF MAN'S DISEASE*— the mortal, hereditary taint of sin. *Maschil.* This is a second additional note not found in Psalm 14, indicating that double attention is to be given to this most instructive song. *A Psalm of David.* It is not a copy of the fourteenth Psalm, emended and revised by a foreign hand; it is another edition by the same author, emphasised in certain parts, and rewritten for another purpose.

**SUBJECT.** The evil nature of man is here brought before our view a second time, in almost the same inspired words. All repetitions are not vain repetitions. We are slow to learn, and need line upon line. David after a long life, found men no better than they were in his youth. Holy Writ never repeats itself needlessly, there is good cause for the second copy of this Psalm; let us read it with more profound attention than before. If our age has advanced from fourteen to fifty-three, we shall find the doctrine of this Psalm more evident than in our youth. The reader is requested to peruse Psalm 14, "Treasury of David, "Vol. 1.

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* And this he does because he is a fool. Being a fool he speaks according to his nature; being a great fool he meddles with a great subject, and comes to a wild conclusion. The atheist is, morally as well as mentally, a fool, a fool in the heart as well as in the head; a fool in morals as well as in philosophy. With the denial of God as a starting point, we may well conclude that the fool's progress is a rapid, riotous, raving, ruinous one. He who begins at impiety is ready for anything.

No God, being interpreted, means no law, no order, no restraint to lust, no limit to passion. Who but a fool would be of this mind? What a Bedlam, or rather what an Aceldama, would the world become if such lawless principles came to be universal! He who heartily entertains an irreligious spirit, and follows it out to its legitimate issues is a son of Belial, dangerous to the commonwealth, irrational, and despicable. Every natural man is, more or less a denier of God. Practical atheism is the religion of the

race.

Corrupt are they. They are rotten. It is idle to compliment them as sincere doubters, and amiable thinkers—they are putrid. There is too much dainty dealing nowadays with atheism; it is not a harmless error, it is an offensive, putrid sin, and righteous men should look upon it in that light. All men being more or less atheistic in spirit, are also in that degree corrupt; their heart is foul, their moral nature is decayed.

And have done abominable iniquity. Bad principles soon lead to bad lives. One does not find virtue promoted by the example of your Voltaires and Tom Paines. Those who talk so abominably as to deny their Maker will act abominably when it serves their turn. It is the abounding denial and forgetfulness of God among men which is the source of the unrighteousness and crime which we see around us. If all men are not outwardly vicious it is to be accounted for by the power of other and better principles, but left to itself the "No God" spirit so universal in mankind would produce nothing but the most loathsome actions.

There is none that doeth good. The one typical fool is reproduced in the whole race; without a single exception men have forgotten the right way. This accusation twice made in the Psalm, and repeated a third time by the inspired apostle Paul, is an indictment most solemn and sweeping, but he who makes it cannot err, he knows what is in man; neither will he lay more to man's charge than he can prove.

**Verse 2.** *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men.* He did so in ages past, and he has continued his steadfast gaze from his all surveying observatory. To see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Had there been one understanding man, one true lover of his God, the divine eye would have discovered him. Those pure heathens and admirable savages that men talk so much of, do not appear to have been visible to the eye of Omniscience, the fact being that they live nowhere but in the realm of fiction. The Lord did not look for great grace, but only for sincerity and right desire, but these he found not. He saw all nations, and all men in all nations, and all hearts in all men, and all motions of all hearts, but he saw neither a clear head nor a clean heart among them all. Where God's eyes see no favourable sign we may rest assured there is none.

**Verse 3.** *Every one of them is gone back.* The whole mass of manhood, all of it, is gone back. In the fourteenth Psalm it was said to turn aside, which was bad enough, but here it is described as running in a diametrically opposite direction. The life of unregenerate manhood is in direct defiance of the law of God, not merely apart from it but opposed to it. They are altogether become filthy. The whole lump is soured with an evil leaven, fouled with an all pervading pollution, made rank with general putrefaction. Thus, in God's sight, our atheistic nature is not the pardoned thing that we think it to be. Errors as to God are not the mild diseases which some account them, they are abominable evils. Fair is the world to blind eyes, but to the all seeing Jehovah it is otherwise. There is none that doeth good,

no, not one. How could there be, when the whole mass was leavened with so evil a leaven? This puts an end to the fictions of the innocent savage, the lone patriarch, "the Indian whose untutored mind," etc. Pope's verse—

"Father of all, in every age;  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, or by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, "

—evaporates in smoke. The fallen race of man, left to its own energy, has not produced a single lover of God or doer of holiness, nor will it ever do so. Grace must interpose, or not one specimen of humanity will be found to follow after the good and true. This is God's verdict after looking down upon the race. Who shall gainsay it?

**Verse 4.** *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* They have no wisdom, certainly, but even so common a thing as knowledge might have restrained them. Can they not see that there is a God? that sin is an evil thing? that persecution recoils upon a man's own head? Are they such utter fools as not to know that they are their own enemies, and are ruining themselves? Who eat up my people as they eat bread. Do they not see that such food will be hard to digest, and will bring on them a horrible vomit when God deals with them in justice? Can they imagine that the Lord will allow them to devour his people with impunity? They must be insane indeed. They have not called upon God. They carry on their cruel enterprises against the saints, and use every means but that which is essential to success in every case, namely, the invocation of God. In this respect persecutors are rather more consistent than Pharisees who devoured widow's houses, and prayed too. The natural man, like Ishmael, loves not the spiritual seed, is very jealous of it, and would fain destroy it, because it is beloved of God; yet the natural man does not seek after the like favour from God. The carnal mind envies those who obtain mercy, and yet it will not seek mercy itself. It plays the dog in the manger. Sinners will out of a malicious jealousy devour those who pray, but yet they will not pray themselves.

**Verse 5.** *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* David sees the end of the ungodly, and the ultimate triumph of the spiritual seed. The rebellious march in fury against the gracious, but suddenly they are seized with a causeless panic. The once fearless boasters tremble like the leaves of the aspen, frightened at their own shadows. In this sentence and this verse, this Psalm differs much from the fourteenth. It is evidently expressive of a higher state of realisation in the poet, he emphasises the truth by stronger expressions. Without cause the wicked are alarmed. He who denies God is at bottom a coward, and in his infidelity he is like the boy in the churchyard who "whistles to keep his courage up." For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against *thee*. When the wicked see the destruction of their fellows they may well quail. Mighty were the hosts which besieged Zion, but they were defeated, and their unburied carcasses proved the prowess of

the God whose being they dared to deny. Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. God's people may well look with derision upon their enemies since they are the objects of divine contempt. They scoff at us, but we may with far greater reason laugh them to scorn, because the Lord our God considers them as less than nothing and vanity.

**Verse 6.** *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion.* Would God the final battle were well over. When will the Lord avenge his own elect? When will the long oppression of the saints come to its close, and glory crown their heads? The word *salvation* is in the plural, to show its greatness. When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall *rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.* Inasmuch as the yoke has been heavy, and the bondage cruel, the liberty will be happy, and the triumph joyous. The second advent and the restoration of Israel are our hope and expectation. We have attempted to throw into rhyme the last two verses of this Psalm:

The foes of Zion quake for fright.  
Where no fear was they quail;  
For well they know that sword of might  
Which cuts through coats of mail.  
The Lord of old defiled their shields,  
And all their spears he scorned;  
Their bones lay scattered over the fields,  
Unburied and unmourned.  
Let Zion's foes be filled with shame;  
Her sons are blessed of God;  
Though scoffers now despise their name,  
The Lord shall break the rod.  
Oh! would our God to Zion turn,  
God with salvation clad;  
Then Judah's harps should music learn,  
And Israel be glad.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** Probably the two Psalms *refer to different periods*; the fourteenth to the earlier portion of the world, or of Jewish history; the fifty-third to a later, perhaps a still future time. Jehovah, through Christ, is frequently said to turn to the world to see what its condition is, and always with the same result. "All flesh had corrupted its way" in the days of Noah, and, "when the Son of Man cometh" again, it is intimated that he will scarcely "find faith on the earth." The two Psalms also *apply to different persons*. The former refers to the enemies of God, who tremble when his presence is made

known; *they are in great fear*, because vengeance is about to be inflicted on them for their sins. Here the Supreme Being is called Jehovah. In the fifty-third Psalm the interests of God's people are principally kept in view. The ungodly are regarded as plotting against the righteous, and it is in this relation their case is considered. The fear that was just and reasonable in the fourteenth Psalm, because it concerned the unrighteous under a sense of impending judgment, is said to be unfounded in the fifty-third, because God was in the midst of his people, *scattering the bones of their enemies*, and showing himself, not as Jehovah, but as the Elohim of his redeemed children. The fourteenth Psalm contemplates judgment; the fifty-third deliverance; and thus, though seemingly alike, a different lesson is conveyed in each. The Psalm, then, descriptive of the universal and continuous corruption of man's nature, very properly occupies an introductory place in a series intended to represent the enemies of Messiah, who oppose his church during his absence, and who are to attempt to resist his power when he comes again. Before entering upon an examination of the character of these opponents, this Psalm teaches that, until changed by grace, all are gone astray; "there is none righteous, no, not one," and that for all there is but one remedy, *the Deliverer coming out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. R. H. Ryland, M.A., in *"The Psalms restored to Messiah,"* 1853.

**Whole Psalm.** The state of earth ought to be deeply felt by us. The world lying in wickedness should occupy much of our thoughts. The enormous guilt, the inconceivable pollution, the ineffably provoking Atheism of this fallen province of God's dominion, might be a theme for our ceaseless meditation and mourning. To impress it the more on us, therefore, the Psalm repeats what has been already sung in Psalm 14. It is the same Psalm, with only a few words varied; it is "line upon line, precept upon precept; "the harp's most melancholy, most dismal notes again sounded in our ear. Not that the Lord would detain us always, or disproportionately long, amid scenes of sadness; for elsewhere he repeats in like manner that most triumphant melody, Ps 40:6-12 108:6-13; but it is good to return now and then to the open field on which we all were found, cast out in loathsome degradation. Andrew A. Bonar, in *"Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,"* 1859.

**Whole Psalm.** A second edition of the fourteenth Psalm, with variations more or less important, in each verse. That either of these compositions is an incorrect copy of the other is highly improbable, because two such copies of the same Psalm would not have been retained in the collection, and because the variations are too uniform, consistent, and significant, to be the work of chance or mere traditional corruption. That the changes were deliberately made by a later writer is improbable, because such a liberty would hardly have been taken with a Psalm of David, and because the latter form, in that case, would either have been excluded from the Psalter or substituted for the first form, or immediately connected with it. The only satisfactory hypothesis is, that the original author afterwards rewrote it, with such modifications as were necessary to bring out certain points distinctly,

but without any intention to supersede the use of the original composition, which therefore still retains its place in the collection. Thus supposition is confirmed by the titles, which ascribe both Psalms to David... As a general fact, it may be stated, that the variations in the Psalm before us are such as render the expression stronger, bolder, and in one or two cases more obscure and difficult. *J. A. Alexander, 1850.*

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm is a variation of Psalm 14. In each of these two Psalms the *name* of God occurs seven times. In Psalm 14, it is three times *Elohim*, and four times *Jehovah*; in the present Psalm it is seven times *Elohim*. *Christopher Wordsworth, 1868.*

**Whole Psalm.** God, in this Psalm, "speaketh twice, "for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth Psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us blushing, and to set us trembling because of them: there is need of "line upon line" to this purpose. God, by the psalmist, here shows—

1. The *fact* of sin. God is a witness to it. He looks down from heaven and sees all the sinfulness of men's hearts and lives. All this is open and naked before him.

2. The *fault* of sin. It is iniquity (Ps 53:1,4); it is an unrighteous thing; it is that in which there is no good (Ps 53:1,3); it is going back from God (Ps 53:3).

3. The *fountain* of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes; they say in their hearts, there is no God at all to call us to account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles.

4. The *folly* of sin. He is a *fool* (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) who harbours such corrupt thoughts. The "workers of iniquity, "whatever they pretend to, "have no knowledge; "they may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God. Ps 53:4.

5. The *filthiness* of sin. Sinners are "corrupt" (Ps 53:1); their nature is vitiated and spoiled; their iniquity is "abominable; "it is odious to the holy God, and renders them so; whereas, otherwise he "hates nothing that he has made." What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

6. The *fruit* of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last! See their cruelty to their brethren! They "eat them up as they eat bread." As if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. See their contempt of God at the same time—they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

7. The *fear and shame* that attends sin (Ps 53:5). "There were they in great fear" who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them and filled them with horror. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame and expose them, "because God hath despised them."

8. The *faith* of the saints, and their hope and power touching this great evil (Ps 53:6). There will come

a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. O that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited for this redemption. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. *Condensed from Matthew Henry, 1662-1714.*

**Verse 1.** *The fool hath said in his heart*, etc. It is in his heart he says this; this is the secret desire of every unconverted bosom. If the breast of God were within the reach of men, it would be stabbed a million of times in one moment. When God was manifest in the flesh, he was altogether lovely; he did no sin; he went about continually doing good: and yet they took him and hung him on a tree; they mocked him and spat upon him. And this is the way men would do with God again. Learn—First. The fearful depravity of your heart. I venture to say there is not an unconverted man present, who has the most distant idea of the monstrous wickedness that is now within his breast. Stop till you are in hell, and it will break out unrestrained. But still let me tell you what it is—you have a heart that would kill God if you could. If the bosom of God were nor within your reach, and one blow would rid the universe of God, you have a heart fit to do the deed. Second. The amazing love of Christ—"While we were enemies, Christ died for us." *Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.*

**Verse 1.** *There is no God.* ny'is properly a noun, and means nonentity, or nonexistence: "nothing of God, "or "no such thing as God." It cannot be explained as a wish—"No God!" *i.e.*, O that there were no God!—because ny'in usage always includes the substantive verb, and denies the existence, or at least the presence, of the person or thing to which it is prefixed. This is also clear from the use of the same word in the last clause, where its sense is unambiguous. *J. A. Alexander on Psalm XIV.*

**Verse 1.** *There is no God.* Thus denying the agency of Providence, for the word *Elohim*, here translated *God*, means *judge* (compare Ex 22:28), and has reference not to the *essence*, but to the *providence* of the Deity. *Daniel Cresswell, 1776-1844.*

**Verse 1.** It is to be noted that Scripture saith, *The fool hath said in his heart*, and not "*thought* in his heart; "that is to say, he doth not so fully think it in judgment, as he hath a good will to be of that belief; for seeing that it makes not for him that there should be a God, he doth seek by all means accordingly to persuade and resolve himself, and studies to affirm, prove, and verify it to himself as some theme or position, all which labour, notwithstanding that sparkle of our creation light, whereby men acknowledge a Deity, burneth still within; and in vain doth he strive utterly to alienate it or put it out, so that it is out of the corruption of his heart and will, and not out of the natural apprehension of his brain and conceit, that he doth set down his opinion, as the comical poet saith, "Then came my mind to be of my opinion, "as if himself and his mind had been two diverse things; therefore, the atheist hath rather said, and held it in his heart, than thought or believed in his heart that there is no God. *Francis Bacon (1560-1626), in "Thoughts on Holy Scripture".*

**Verse 2.** *That did seek God.* Although all things are full of God, yet is he to be *sought for* of godly

men, by reason of the darkness which compasseth our minds through original sin. For both the flesh, and the senses, and earthly affections do hinder us from knowing of him, yea, though he be present.

*Peter Martyr, 1500-1562.*

**Verses 2-3.** Their sin is described in gradation. They do *not understand*, because a true knowledge of things divine forms the basis of proper conduct towards God; they do *not ask for God*, because they only care for him whose clear and sure insight apprehends him as their highest possession; they are *gone aside*, because he who cares not for him is sure to get estranged from him, and to deviate from his paths; and they are *altogether become filthy* (*i.e.*, worthless), because man's proper strength and fitness for virtue must well from the fountain of communion with God. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

**Verse 3.** *They are altogether become filthy. wxlag neelachu.* They are become *sour and rancid*; a metaphor taken from milk that has fermented and turned sour, rancid, and worthless. *Adam Clarke, 1760-1832.*

**Verse 3.** (*second clause*). The word *wxlag*, rendered *they are become filthy*, might be read, *they have become rotten or putrid.* *John Morison, 1829.*

**Verse 3.** (*last clause*). Evil men are not only guilty of sins of commission, having done abominable iniquity, but they are guilty of many sins of omission. In fact, they have never done one holy act. They may be moral, decent, amiable, they may belong to the church; but *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 4.** *Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Conscience is a means to curb and restrain, control and rebuke corrupt nature, and the swelling forms of it. It is not there as a native inhabitant, but as a garrison planted in a rebellious town by the great Governor of the world, to keep the rebellion of the inhabitants within compass, who else would break forth into present confusion. David, speaking of the corruption of man by nature, after this question, *Whether there be not some knowledge to discover their evil doings to them?* yes, says he, *Have they no knowledge, who eat up my people as bread* Yes; and therefore (Ps 53:5) *They are often in fear*, God having placed this there to overcome them with fear; and by that to restrain them from many outrages against God's people, whom in their desires, and sometimes practice, they eat up as bread Therefore this knowledge is put in as a bridle to corrupt nature, as a hook was put into Sennacherib's nostrils (Isa 37:29) to rule and tame men, and overcome them with fear. If they had no knowledge they would eat up one another, and the church, as bread; but there is their fear, says he, that is, thence it comes to pass they are kept in awe *Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1679.*

**Verse 4.** *Who eat up my people as they eat bread C'est, n'en font non plus de conscience, que de manger un morceau de pain.* (That is, they have no more scruple in doing this than in eating a morsel of bread.) *French Margin.*

**Verse 4.** *My people.* David may call the serious *his people*, because of his regard for them, and

because they were his supporters and friends. They adhered to him in all his afflictions. ("Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, " Ru 1:16.) *Benjamin Boothroyd*, 1836.

**Verse 5.** *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* There is a fond and superstitious fear, when men are afraid of their shadows, as Pisander was afraid of meeting his own soul; and Antenor would never go forth of the doors, but either in a coach closed upon all sides, or with a target borne over his head, fearing, I guess, lest the sky should fall down upon it, according to that in the Psalm, *They fear where no fear is.* *John King*, 1559-1621.

**Verse 5.** *There were they in great fear, where no fear was.* Behold how fearful a hell a wounded conscience is! For why is Cain afraid to be killed, seeing there is none living to perform it, but his father and mother, and perhaps some women children, which the Scripture nameth not? It is God's just judgment, that they that will not fear the Lord who is only to be feared, should stand in fear of them who are justly no cause of fear. He that lately feared not to kill his brother, is now made a terror to himself. Hereby also we may consider what is the repentance of the wicked; they see perhaps the fault together with the punishment, but they admit the fault and lament the punishment. *Nicholas Gibbens*, 1602.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

See the hints on Psalm 14.

**Verse 1.** The fool's inside and outside.

**Verse 1.**

1. The folly of atheism. He who says there is no God is a fool.

(a) No reason for the assertion.

(b) All reason against it.

2. The seat of atheism is the heart; it is a moral unbelief not an intellectual, the language of the will not of the understanding.

3. Cause of atheism.

(a) Loving evil.

(b) Hating good. *G. R.*

**Verse 2.**

1. God has not left the world to itself.

2. He takes particular notice of all that is in it.

3. The only thing he values in it is the knowledge of himself. *G. R.*

**Verse 4.** How far knowledge is and is not a restraint upon ungodliness.

**Verse 4.** It is a sin not to call upon God.

1. What is it to call upon God? Three things required in it.

- (a) A drawing near to him.  
(b) A speaking to him. 1Sa 1:12-13.  
(c) A praying to him.
2. How should we call upon God?  
(a) Reverently, considering (1) God's holiness and greatness; (2) our own sin and weakness. Ge 18:27.  
(b) Understandingly. 1Co 14:15. (1) Of what we ask. (2) Of whom we ask it.  
(c) Submissively.  
(d) Believingly. Mr 11:24 Jas 1:6.  
(e) Sincerely. Jas 4:3.  
(f) Constantly. (1) So as to be always in a praying frame. (2) So as to take all occasions of pouring forth our souls in prayer to God. (3) So as to let no day slip without prayer.
3. How it appears to be a sin not to call upon God.  
(a) He hath commanded it. Isa 55:6 1Ti 2:8.  
(b) Because praying is one of the principal parts of worship we owe to God.
4. Who are guilty of this sin?  
(a) All who pray to any one else but God.  
(b) All who neglect either public, private, or family prayer.  
(c) All who pray, but not aright. *William Beveridge (1636-1708), in "Thesaurus Theologicus."*

#### **Verse 5.**

1. What persecutors are to themselves—their own tormentors, full even of groundless fears.
2. What they are to one another—though in concert here, their bones are scattered hereafter.
3. What they are to those whom they persecute—made ashamed before them.
4. What they are to God—a contempt and derision. *G. R.*

#### **Verse 6.**

1. There is salvation for Israel.
2. That salvation is in Zion.
3. Their salvation remains there when they are banished from it.
4. Their joy becomes greater when they return. *G. R.*

#### **Psalm 54**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* The music was to be that of stringed instruments. Variety is to be studied in our tunes, and in all other matters relating to sacred song. Monotony is often the death of congregational praise. Providence is varied, and so should our recording songs be. *Maschil.* We are to learn and to teach by what we sing. Edification must not be divorced from psalmody. *A Psalm of David.* David's productions were as plentiful as they are profitable. His varied life was for our benefit, for from it we derive these hymns, which at this hour are as fresh and as precious as when he wrote them. *When the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?* To curry favour with Saul they were guilty of gross inhospitality. What cared they what innocent blood was shed so that they earned the graceless monarch's smile! David came quietly among them, hoping for a little rest in his many flights, but they deserted him in his solitary abode, and betrayed him. He turns to God in prayer, and so strong was his faith that he soon sang himself into delightful serenity.

**DIVISION.** From Ps 54:1-3, where the *Selah* makes a pause for us, the psalmist pleads with God, and then in the rest of the song, laying aside all doubt, he chants a hymn of joyful triumph. The vigour of faith is the death of anxiety, and the birth of security.

#### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Save me, O God.* Thou art my Saviour; all around me are my foes and their eager helpers. No shelter is permitted me. Every land rejects me and denies me rest. But thou, O God, wilt give me refuge, and deliver me from all my enemies. By thy name, by thy great and glorious nature. Employ all thine attributes for me. Let every one of the perfections which are blended in thy divine name work for me. Is not thine honour pledged for my defence? And judge me by thy strength. Render justice to me, for none else will or can. Thou canst give me efficient justice, and right my wrongs by thine omnipotence. We dare not appeal to God in a bad cause, but when we know that we can fearlessly carry our cause before his justice we may well commit it to his power.

**Verse 2.** *Hear my prayer, O God.* This has ever been the defence of saints. As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun. Give ear to the words of my mouth. Vocal prayer helps the supplicant, and we keep our minds more fully awake when we can use our tongues as well as our hearts. But what is prayer if God hear not? It is all one whether we babble nonsense or plead arguments if our God grant us not a hearing. When his case had become dangerous, David could not afford to pray out of mere custom, he must succeed in his pleadings, or become the prey of his adversary.

**Verse 3.** *For strangers are risen up against me.* Those who had no cause for ill will had gone against him; persons to whom he could have given no offence, for they were strangers to him. They were

aliens to his God also, and should these be allowed to worry and destroy him. A child may well complain to his father when strangers come in to molest him. What right have they to interfere? Let them leave off meddling and mind their own concerns. And oppressors seek after my soul. Saul, that persecuting tyrant, had stamped his own image on many more. Kings generally coin their own likeness. He led the way, and others followed seeking David's soul, his blood, his life, his very existence. Cruel and intense were they in their malice, they would utterly crush the good man; no half measure would content them. They have not set God before them. They had no more regard for right and justice than if they knew no God, or cared for none. Had they regarded God they would not have betrayed the innocent to be hunted down like a poor harmless stag. David felt that atheism lay at the bottom of the enmity which pursued him. Good men are hated for God's sake, and this is a good plea for them to urge in prayer. Selah. As if he said, "Enough of this, let us pause." He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry: a little more holy meditation would make our words more suitable and our emotions more fervent.

**Verse 4.** *Behold, God is mine helper.* He saw enemies everywhere, and now to his joy as he looks upon the band of his defenders he sees one whose aid is better than all the help of men; he is overwhelmed with joy at recognizing his divine champion, and cries, Behold. And is not this a theme for pious exultation in all time, that the great God protects us, his own people: what matters the number or violence of our foes when HE uplifts the shield of his omnipotence to guard us, and the sword of his power to aid us? Little care we for the defiance of the foe while we have the defence of God. The Lord is with them that uphold my soul. The reigning Lord, the great Adonai is in the camp of my defenders. Here was a greater champion than any of the three mighties, or than all the valiant men who chose David for their captain. The psalmist was very confident, he felt so thoroughly that his heart was on the Lord's side that he was sure God was on *his* side. He asked in the first verse for deliverance, and here he returns thanks for upholding: while we are seeking one mercy which we have not, we must not be unmindful of another which we have. It is a great mercy to have some friends left us, but a greater mercy still to see the Lord among them, for like so many cyphers our friends stand for nothing till the Lord sets himself as a great unit in the front of them.

**Verse 5.** *He shall reward evil unto mine enemies.* They worked for evil, and they shall have their wages. It cannot be that malice should go unavenged. It were cruelty to the good to be lenient to their persecutors. It is appointed, and so it must ever be, that those who shoot upward the arrows of malice shall find them fall upon themselves. The recoil of their own gun has often killed oppressors. Cut them off in thy truth. Not in ferocious revenge is this spoken, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge. Let the veracity of thy threatenings be placed beyond dispute, the decree is right and just, let it be fulfilled. It is not a private desire, but the solemn utterance of a military man,

a grossly injured man, a public leader destined to be a monarch, and a man well trained in the school of Moses, whose law ordains eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.

**Verse 6.** *I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* Spontaneously will I bring my freewill offerings. So certain is he of deliverance that he offers a vow by anticipation. His overflowing gratitude would load the altars of God with victims cheerfully presented. The more we receive, the more we ought to render. The spontaneousness of our gifts is a great element in their acceptance; the Lord loveth a cheerful giver. I will praise thy name, O Lord. As if no amount of sacrifice could express his joyful feelings, he resolves to be much in vocal thanksgiving. The name which he invoked in prayer (Ps 54:1), he will now magnify in praise. Note how roundly he brings it out: O Jehovah. This is ever the grand name of the revealed God of Israel, a name which awakens the most sublime sentiments, and so nourishes the most acceptable praise. None can praise the Lord so well as those who have tried and proved the preciousness of his name in seasons of adversity. The psalmist adds, for it is good, and surely we may read this with a double nominative, God's name is good, and so is his praise. It is of great use to our souls to be much in praise; we are never so holy or so happy as when our adoration of God abounds. Praise is good in itself, good to us, and good to all around us. If David's enemies are described in Ps 54:3 as not setting God before them, he here declares that he is of a different mind from them, for he resolves to have the Lord in perpetual remembrance in his sacrifices and praises.

**Verse 7.** *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.* Up to that time deliverance had come, and for that danger also he felt that rescue was near. David lived a life of dangers and hair breadth escapes, yet he was always safe. In the retrospect of his very many deliverances he feels that he must praise God, and looking upon the mercy which he sought as though it were already received, he sang this song over it—

"And a new song is in my mouth,  
To long loved music set,  
Glory to thee for all the grace  
I have not tasted yet."

Out of all trouble our covenant God is pledged to bring us, and therefore even now let us uplift the note of triumph unto Jehovah, the faithful preserver of them that put their trust in him. Thus far have we proved his promise good; he changes not, and therefore in all the unknown future he will be equally our guardian and defence, "showing himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies. He knew that yet he should look on his haughty foes, gazing down on them in triumph as now they looked on him in contempt. He desired this as a matter of justice, and not of personal pique. His righteous soul exulted because he knew that unprovoked and gratuitous malice would meet with a righteous punishment. Could we keep out

of our hearts all personal enmity as fully as the psalmist did in this Psalm, we might yet equally feel with him a sacred acquiescence and delight in that divine justice which will save the righteous and overthrow the malicious. In closing, let us trust that if we are as friendless as this man of God, we may resort in prayer as he did, exercise the like faith, and find ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**TITLE.** From the inscription, learn,

1. Particular straits and particular deliveries should be particularly remarked: as David here remembereth the danger he was in by the treachery of the *Ziphims*.
2. Mighty men will find readily more friends in an evil cause, than the godly do find in a good cause: as Saul has the Ziphims to offer their service to his cruelly, when David was in straits.
3. The wicked are very hearty to do an ill turn, and glad to find occasion of it. "*Doth not David, "saith they, "hide himself with us?"*" as if this had been good and blessed news. *David Dickson (1583-1662), in "A Brief Explication upon the Psalms."*

**Whole Psalm.** The church has taken a clear view in appointing this as one of the Psalms in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ. Read thus, it is very plain and intelligible; requiring little more than the first idea to exhibit a perfect correspondence with the life and feelings of the Messiah. *William Hill Tucker, in "The Psalms... with Notes, "1840.*

**Whole Psalm.** In the first three verses, David being sought for by his enemies, prays against them. That was his course, he always began his conflict with God, contending and wrestling with him for a blessing and assistance. He durst not lift up his hands even against the enemies of God (yet what durst not David do?) till he had first lifted them up in humble supplication to the Lord his strength. "Who taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight." Ps 144:1. This being done, his courage breaks out like lightning, he doubts not of slaying his thousands and ten thousands. So in the fourth and fifth verses, he becomes his own prophet, promising himself victory. For who can resist him who hath Omnipotence for his second? Or how can any enemy maintain a fight against that captain who hath beforehand defeated and broken their forces by his prayers? assured his conquest before he puts on his armour? Then in the last verses, David concludes where he began, thankfully acknowledgeth God's goodness in his deliverance, and the dissipation of his enemies, obliging himself to a return of dutiful affectionate service, in consideration of so great mercies received. *J. Dolben, in a Thanksgiving Sermon, 1665.*

**Whole Psalm.** Blessed Redeemer! give me grace to eye thee, and to call to my recollection thine exercises amidst the false friends and open foes, which in the days of thy flesh surrounded thee.

Lord! help me so to consider thee, who didst endure such a contradiction of sinners against thyself, that I may not be weary and faint in mind. And while the Ziphims of the present hour harass and distress me, and would deliver my soul up into the hand of the enemy: oh! for grace to be looking unto thee, and deriving strength from thee, that I may discover thy gracious hand delivering me out of all my troubles, and making me more than conqueror in thy strength, and in the power of thy might.

*Robert Hawker, D.D., 1753-1827.*

**Verse 1.** *Save me, O God.* As David was at this time placed beyond the reach of human assistance, he must be understood as praying to be saved by the *name and the power of God*, in an emphatic sense, or by these in contradistinction to the usual means of deliverance. Though all help must ultimately come from God, there are ordinary methods by which he generally extends it. When these fail, and every earthly stay is removed, he must then take the work into his own hands. It was such a situation that David here fled to the saints' last asylum, and sought to be saved by a miracle of divine power. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 1.** *Judge me by thy strength*, or power, *i.e.*, determine, decide my cause by thy mighty power. Saul, in the cause between him and David, was resolved to end it by force only, and to arbitrate in no other way than by a javelin, a sword, or his forces. The psalmist well knew that Saul, in this respect, would be too hard for him; and therefore applies for protection and justice to one whose power he knew was infinitely superior to his adversaries, and who, he was assured, could and would defend him. *Samuel Chandler (1693-1766), in "A Critical History of the Life of David."*

**Verse 2.** (*second clause*). Let *the words of my mouth* with which I have defended my cause, be pleasing and acceptable to thee. For in this way can *prayers* and *words of the mouth* be correctly distinguished, unless any one should wish simply to understand by them *prayers uttered by the mouth*; but, as I have said, the phrase is more emphatic. *Hermann Venema, 1697-1787.*

**Verse 3.** *Strangers*: aliens to his truth, men who from unbelief have estranged themselves from all lot and portion in his covenants—oppress and persecute. *William Hill Tucker.*

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). The Chaldee interpreter reads, *proud men*, instead of *strangers*, a reading which also is found in eight of Kennicott's Codices. So also Ps 86:14. *William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, " etc., 1837.*

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). There is a great mistake made by rendering the word *oyrz (zarim) strangers*. The Ziphites surely were Israelites, and not strangers. The fact is this, that word is taken from *hrz (zarah)* the primary meaning of which is "to scatter," "to disperse," "also "to sift," "as grain. Hence it signifies, likewise figuratively, to sift a matter, to investigate, to search out, to trace out. So here, David complains of the new and dangerous enemies he had got in the Ziphites, who became Saul's spies. When he pleads, therefore, for deliverance, saying, "Save me, O God, " etc., he describes the danger he was in: *For spies have risen against me. Benjamin Weiss, in "New Translation, Exposition,*

and Chronological Arrangement of the Psalms," 1858.

**Verse 3.** *Opressors seek after my soul; i.e., my life at least; my soul also they would destroy, if it lay in their power, as the Papists delivered up John Huss to the devil. John Trapp, 1611-1662.*

**Verse 4.** *Behold, says he, I produce a certain fact, well known, demonstrated by a new proof, and worthy of all attention; for the particle behold, contains this breadth of meaning. Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 4.** Christ sees with the utmost clearness, that God will be his *own helper*, and of them—the disciples and believers—that *uphold his soul*. In the same moment, does he foresee the destruction of his enemies. He views, in thought, the armies of Titus, the fall of the Jewish nation, and the dispersion of the remnant. He beholds the avenging hand of God, stretched in fury over the destroyers. *William Hill Tucker.*

**Verse 4.** (*second clause*). Such as take part with the persecuted saints, God will take part with them! *The Lord is with them that uphold my soul. David Dickson.*

**Verses 4-5.** He is assured of help to himself and to his friends, and of vengeance to his enemies. Whence learn,

1. Fervent prayer hath readily a swift answer, and sometimes wonderfully swift, even before a man have ended speech, as here David findeth in experience. *Behold, saith he, God is my helper.*

2. The sight of faith is very clear and piercing through all clouds when God holds forth the light of his Spirit unto it, it can demonstrate God present in an instant; ready to help in greatest straits: *Behold, God is my helper.*

3. There is more joy in God's felt presence than grief in felt trouble; for, *Behold, God is mine helper*, was more comfortable to David than his friends' unkindness, and strangers' malice was grievous. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Cut them off.* He desires that God would destroy them with a *death dealing blow*, which is the force the word *tmu* contains; its primitive sense is *to be silent, to keep silence*, whence it is transferred to a stroke penetrating deeply and striking fatally, such as is called a *silent* blow, opposed to a *sounding* one, which is wont to rebound and not pierce deeply. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 6.** *I will freely sacrifice unto thee.* He would *sacrifice freely*: by which he does not allude to the circumstance, that sacrifices of thanksgiving were at the option of worshippers, but to the alacrity and cheerfulness with which he would pay his vow when he had escaped his present dangers. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 7.** *Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* Or, *mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies*; that is, he was able to meet them without terror. *Samuel Davidson, D.D., 1852.*

**Verse 7.** The reader will note that the words *his desire* are supplied by our translators, and are not in the original text. *C. H. S.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** In the deliverance of the saints the honour and power of God are concerned.

1. Their failure would dishonour both.
2. Their salvation glorifies both.
3. Both are immutable, therefore we have a sure plea at all times.

**Verse 2.** Our main concern in prayer.

1. What is meant by God's hearing prayer.
2. How we may know that he has done so.
3. What is to be done when this is doubtful.
4. What is due to him when the hearing is given.

**Verse 3.** Strange trials.

1. They are not altogether strange.
  - (a) Not so to God.
  - (b) Not so in the history of the church.
  - (c) Not so to the provisions of grace wherein they are anticipated.
2. Wherein they are strange.
  - (a) They reveal God anew.
  - (b) Endear forgotten promises.
  - (c) Train unused graces.
  - (d) Being new praises, etc.

**Verse 3.** (*last clause*). The root of sin: if they remembered his authority they dared not, if they tasted his love they would not, if they were conformed to his nature they could not.

**Verse 4.** A theme for wonder.

1. At his unmerited grace, that he should side with *me*.
2. At his gracious power, for who can resist him?
3. At his practical help, for he has upheld my soul.

**Verse 6.** We should sacrifice voluntarily, liberally, joyfully, continuously, with pure motive.

**Verse 6.** The goodness of praising the good name.

**Verse 7.** (*first clause*). The exclamation of the newly pardoned penitent, the cry of the delivered saint, the song of the ripe Christian, the shout of the glorified believer.

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## WORK UPON THE FIFTY-FOURTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* pp. 152-4, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

## Psalm 55

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

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**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* Another song to be accompanied by stringed instruments. The strain is at one time mournful, and at another softly sweet. It needed the chief musician's best care to see that the music was expressive of the sentiment. *Maschil.* It is not a mere personal hymn, there is teaching in it for us all, and where our Lord shines through David, his personal type, there is a great deep of meaning. *Of David.* The man of many conditions, much tried, and much favoured, persecuted but delivered and exalted, was from experience enabled to write such precious verses in which he sets forth not only the sorrows of common pilgrims, but of the Lord of the way himself.

**SUBJECT.** It would be idle to fix a time, and find an occasion for this Psalm with any dogmatism. It reads like a song of the time of Absalom and Ahithophel. It was after David had enjoyed peaceful worship (Ps 55:14), when he was or had just been a dweller in a city (Ps 55:9-11), and when he remembered his former roamings in the wilderness. Altogether it seems to us to relate to that mournful era when the King was betrayed by his trusted counsellor. The spiritual eye ever and anon sees the Son of David and Judas, and the chief priests appearing and disappearing upon the glowing canvas of the Psalm.

**DIVISION.** From Ps 55:1-8, the suppliant spreads his case in general before his God; in Ps 55:9-11, he portrays his enemies; in Ps 55:12-14, he mentions one special traitor, and cries for vengeance, or foretells it in Ps 55:15. From Ps 55:16-19 he consoles himself by prayer and faith; in Ps 55:20-21 he again mentions the deceitful covenant breaker, and closes with a cheering exhortation to the saints (Ps 55:22), and a denunciation of destruction upon the wicked and deceitful (Ps 55:22).

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## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Give ear to my prayer, O God.* The fact is so commonly before us, otherwise we should be surprised to observe how universally and constantly the saints resort to prayer in seasons of distress. From the Great Elder Brother down to the very least of the divine family, all of them delight in prayer. They run as naturally to the mercyseat in time of trouble as the little chickens to the hen in the hour of danger. But note well that it is never the bare act of prayer which satisfies the godly, they crave an audience with heaven, and an answer from the throne, and nothing less will content them. Hide not thyself from my supplication. Do not stop thine ear, or restrain thy hand. When a man saw his neighbour in distress, and deliberately passed him by, he was said to hide himself from him; and the psalmist begs that the Lord would not so treat him. In that dread hour when Jesus bore our sins upon

the tree, his Father did hide himself, and this was the most dreadful part of all the Son of David's agony. Well may each of us deprecate such a calamity as that God should refuse to hear our cries.

**Verse 2.** *Attend unto me, and hear me.* This is the third time he prays the same prayer. He is in earnest, in deep and bitter earnest. If his God do not hear, he feels that all is over with him. He begs for his God to be a listener and an answerer. I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. He gives a loose to his sorrows, permits his mind to rehearse her griefs, and to pour them out in such language as suggests itself at the time, whether it be coherent or not. What a comfort that we may be thus familiar with our God! We may not complain *of* him, but we may complain *to* him. Our rambling thoughts when we are distracted with grief we may bring before him, and that too in utterances rather to be called a noise than language. He will attend so carefully that he will understand us, and he will often fulfil desires which we ourselves could not have expressed in intelligible words. "Groanings that cannot be uttered," are often prayers which cannot be refused. Our Lord himself used strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared.

**Verse 3.** *Because of the voice of the enemy.* The enemy was vocal and voluble enough, and found a voice where his godly victim had nothing better than a "noise." Slander is seldom short of expression, it prates and prattles evermore. Neither David, nor our Lord, nor any of the saints were allowed to escape the attacks of venomous tongues, and this evil was in every case the cause of acute anguish. Because of the oppression of the wicked: the unjust pressed and oppressed the righteous; like an intolerable burden they crushed them down, and brought them to their knees before the Lord. This is a thrice told story, and to the end of time it will be true; he that is born after the flesh will persecute him that is born after the Spirit. The great seed of the woman suffered from a bruised heel. For they cast iniquity upon me, they black me with their soot bags, throw the dust of their lying over me, cast the vitriol of their calumny over me. They endeavour to trip me up, and if I do not fall they say I do. And in wrath they hate me. With a hearty ill will they detested the holy man. It was no sleeping animosity, but a moral rancour which reigned in their bosoms. The reader needs not that we show how applicable this is to our Lord.

**Verse 4.** *My heart is sore pained within me.* His spirit writhed in agony, like a poor worm; he was mentally as much in pain as a woman in travail physically. His inmost soul was touched; and a wounded spirit who can bear? If this were written when David was attacked by his own favourite son, and ignominiously driven from his capital, he had reason enough for using these expressions. And the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Mortal fears seized him, he felt like one suddenly surrounded with the glooms of the shadow of death, upon whom the eternal night suddenly descends. Within and without he was afflicted, and his chief terror seemed to come from above, for he uses the expression, "Fallen upon me." He gave himself up for lost. He felt that he was as good as dead. The inmost centre of his nature was moved with dismay. Think of our Lord in the garden, with his "soul exceeding

sorrowful even unto death, " and you have a parallel to the griefs of the psalmist. Perchance, dear reader, if as yet thou hast not trodden this gloomy way, thou wilt do soon; then be sure to mark the footprints of thy Lord in this miry part of the road.

**Verse 5.** *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.* Like house breakers these robbers were entering his soul. Like one who feels a fainting fit coming over him, so the oppressed suppliant was falling into a state of terror. His fear was so great as to make him tremble. He did not know what would happen next, or how soon the worst should come. The sly, mysterious whisperings of slander often cause a noble mind more fear than open antagonism; we can be brave against an open foe, but cowardly, plotting conspiracies bewilder and distract us. And horror hath overwhelmed me. He was as one enveloped in a darkness that might be felt. As Jonah went down into the sea, so did David appear to go down into deeps of horror. He was unmanned, confounded, brought into a hideous state of suspense and mortal apprehension.

**Verse 6.** *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* If he could not resist as an eagle, he would escape as a dove. Swiftly, and unobserved, on strong, untiring pinions would he h away from the abodes of slander and wickedness. His love of peace made him sigh for an escape from the scene of strife.

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,  
Where rumour of oppression and deceit  
Might never reach me more."

We are all too apt to utter this vain desire, for vain it is; no wings of doves or eagles could bear us away from the sorrows of a trembling heart. Inward grief knows nothing of place. Moreover, it is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. We had better face the danger, for we have no armour for our backs. He had need of a swifter conveyance than doves' pinions who would outfly slander; he may be at rest who does not fly, but commends his case to his God. Even the dove of old found no rest till she returned to her ark, and we amid all our sorrow may find rest in Jesus. We need not depart; all will be well if we trust in him.

**Verse 7.** *Lo, then would I wander far off.* Yet when David was far off, he sighed to be once more near Jerusalem; thus, in our ill estate we ever think the past to be better than the present. We shall be called to fly far enough away, and perchance we shall be loath to go; we need not indulge vain notions of premature escape from earth.

And remain in the wilderness. He found it none such a dear abode when there, yet resolves now to make it his permanent abode. Had he been condemned to receive his wish he would ere long have felt like Selkirk, in the poet's verse—

"O solitude, where are the charms

That sages have found in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms  
Than reign in this horrible place."

Our Lord, while free from all idle wishes, found much strength in solitude, and loved the mountain's brow at midnight, and the quiet shade of the olives of Gethsemane. It is better practically to use retirement than pathetically to sigh for it. Yet it is natural, when all men do us wrong, to wish to separate ourselves from their society; nature, however, must yield to grace, and we must endure the contradiction of sinners against ourselves, and not be weary and faint in our minds. Selah. After such a flight well may the mind rest. When we are going too fast, and giving way too freely to regrets, it is well to cry, "halt, "and pause awhile, till more sober thoughts return.

**Verse 8.** *I would hasten my escape.* He tried to pause but could not, like a horse which when pulled up slips on a little because of the speed at which he was going. David declares that he would not waste a moment, or stay to bid adieu to his friends, but up and away at once, for fear he should be too late, and because he could bear the clamour of his foes no longer. From the windy storm and tempest. A storm was brewing, and, like a dove, he would outfly it and reach a calmer region. Swifter than the storm cloud would he fly, to avoid the deluge of rain, and the flash of the lightning. Alas! poor soul, no such wings are thine, as yet thou must tarry here and feel the tempest; but be of good cheer, thou shalt stretch thy wings ere long for a bolder flight, heaven shall receive thee, and there thy sorrows shall have a finis of felicity among the birds of paradise.

**Verse 9.** *Destroy, O Lord.* Put mine enemies to the rout. Let them be devoured by the sword, since they have unsheathed it against me. How could we expect the exiled monarch to offer any other prayer than this against the rebellious bands of Absalom, and the crafty devices of Ahithophel? Divide their tongues. Make another Babel in their debates and councils of war. Set them at cross purposes. Divide the pack that the hunted one may escape. The divisions of error are the hope of truth. For I have seen violence and strife in the city. The rabble and their leaders were plotting and planning, raging and contending against their king, running wild with a thousand mad projects: anarchy had fermented among them, and the king hoped that now it might come to pass that the very lawlessness which had exiled him would create weakness among his foes. Revolution devours its own children. They who are strong through violence, will sooner or later find that their strength is their death. Absalom and Ahithophel may raise the mob, but they cannot so easily rule it, nor so readily settle their own policy as to remain firm friends. The prayer of David was heard, the rebels were soon divided in their councils; Ahithophel went his way to be hanged with a rope, and Absalom to be hanged without one.

**Verse 10.** *Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof.* The city, the holy city had become a den of wickedness; conspirators met in the dark, and talked in little knots in the streets even in broad

daylight. Meanwhile the country was being roused to revolt, and the traitors without threatened to environ the city, and act in concert with the rebels within. No doubt there was a smothered fire of insurrection which Absalom kindled and fanned, which David perceived with alarm some time before he left Jerusalem; and when he quitted the city it broke out into an open flame. Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Unhappy capital to be thus beset by foes, left by her monarch, and filled with all those elements of turbulence which breed evil and trouble. Unhappy king to be thus compelled to see the mischief which he could not avert laying waste the city which he loved so well. There was another King whose many tears watered the rebellious city, and who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

**Verse 11.** *Wickedness is in the midst thereof.* The very heart of the city was base. In her places of authority crime went hand in hand with calamity. All the wilder and more wicked elements were uppermost; the *canaille* were commanders; the scum floated uppermost; justice was at a discount; the population was utterly demoralized; prosperity had vanished and order with it. Deceit and guile depart not from her streets. In all the places of concourse crafty tongues were busy persuading the people with cozening phrases. Crafty demagogues led the people by the nose. Their good king was defamed in all ways, and when they saw *him* go away, they fell to reviling the governors of their own choosing. The forum was the fortress of fraud, the congress was the convention of cunning. Alas, poor Jerusalem, to be thus the victim of sin and shame! Virtue reviled and vice regnant! Her solemn assemblies broken up, her priests fled, her king banished, and troops of reckless villains parading her streets, sunning themselves on her walls, and vomiting their blasphemies in her sacred shrines. Here was cause enough for the sorrow which so plaintively utters itself in these verses.

**Verse 12.** The reader will do well to observe how accurately the psalmist described his own Psalm when he said, "I mourn in my complaint, "or rather "give loose to my thoughts, "for he proceeds from one point of his sorrow to another, wandering on like one in a maze, making few pauses, and giving no distinct intimations that he is changing the subject. Now from the turbulent city his mind turns to the false hearted councillor. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne *it*. It was not an open foe, but a pretended friend; he went over to the other camp and tried to prove the reality of his treachery by calumniating his old friend. None are such real enemies as false friends. Reproaches from those who have been intimate with us, and trusted by us, cut us to the quick; and they are usually so well acquainted with our peculiar weaknesses that they know how to touch us where we are most sensitive, and to speak so as to do us most damage. The slanders of an avowed antagonist are seldom so mean and dastardly as those of a traitor, and the absence of the elements of ingratitude and treachery renders them less hard to bear. We can bear from Shimei what we cannot endure from Ahithophel. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;

*then I would have hid myself from him.* We can find a hiding place from open foes, but who can escape from treachery? If our enemies proudly boast over us we nerve our souls for resistance, but when those who pretended to love us leer at us with contempt, whither shall we go? Our blessed Lord had to endure at its worst the deceit and faithlessness of a favoured disciple; let us not marvel when we are called to tread the road which is marked by his pierced feet.

**Verse 13.** *But it was thou.* He sees him. The poetic fury is upon him, he sees the traitor as though he stood before him in flesh and blood. He singles him out, he points his finger at him, he challenges him to his face. But thou. *Et tu, Brute.* And thou, Ahithophel, art thou here? Judas, betrayest *thou* the Son of Man? A man mine equal. Treated by me as one of my own rank, never looked upon as an inferior, but as a trusted friend. My guide, a counsellor so sage that I trusted thine advice and found it prudent to do so. And mine acquaintance, with whom I was on most intimate terms, who knew me even as I knew him by mutual disclosures of heart. No stranger occasionally conversed with, but a near and dear friend admitted to my secret fellowship. It was fiendish treason for such a one to prove false hearted. There was no excuse for such villainy. Judas stood very much in this relation to our Lord, he was treated as an equal, trusted as treasurer, and in that capacity often consulted with. He knew the place where the Master was wont to spend his solitude; in fact, he knew all the Master's movements, and yet he betrayed him to his remorseless adversaries. How justly might the Lord have pointed at him and said, But thou; but his gentler spirit warned the son of perdition in the mildest manner, and had not Iscariot been tenfold a child of hell he would have relinquished his detestable purpose.

**Verse 14.** *We took sweet counsel together.* It was not merely the counsel which men take together in public or upon common themes, their fellowship had been tender and confidential. The traitor had been treated lovingly, and trusted much. Solace, mutual and cheering, had grown out of their intimate communings. There were secrets between them of no common kind. Soul had been in converse with soul, at least on David's part. However feigned might have been the affection of the treacherous one, the betrayed friend had not dealt with him coldly, or guarded his utterance before him. Shame on the wretch who could belie such fellowship, and betray such confidence! And walked unto the house of God in company. Religion had rendered their intercourse sacred, they had mingled their worship, and communed on heavenly themes. If ever any bonds ought to be held inviolable, religious connections should be. There is a measure of impiety, of a detestable sort, in the deceit which debases the union of men who make profession of godliness. Shall the very altar of God be defiled with hypocrisy? Shall the gatherings of the temple be polluted by the presence of treachery? All this was true of Ahithophel, and in a measure of Judas. His union with the Lord was on the score of faith, they were joined in the holiest of enterprises, he had been sent on the most gracious of errands. His cooperation with Jesus to serve his own abominable ends stamped him as the firstborn of hell. Better had it been for him had he never been born. Let all deceitful professors be warned by his doom, for like Ahithophel he went to

his own place by his own hand, and retains a horrible preeminence in the calendar of notorious crime. Here was one source of heart break for the Redeemer, and it is shared in by his followers. Of the serpent's brood some vipers still remain, who will sting the hand that cherished them, and sell for silver those who raised them to the position which rendered it possible for them to be so abominably treacherous.

**Verse 15.** Not thus would Jesus pray, but the rough soldier David so poured out the anguish of his spirit, under treachery and malice seldom equalled and altogether unprovoked. The soldier, as such, desires the overthrow of his foes, for this very end he fights; and viewed as a matter of law and justice, David was right in his wish; he was waging a just, defensive war against men utterly regardless of truth and justice. Read the words as a warrior's imprecation. Let death seize upon them. Traitors such as these deserve to die, there is no living with them, earth is polluted by their tread; if spies are shot, much more these sneaking villains. Let them go down quick into hell. While in the vigour of life into *sheol* let them sink, let them suddenly exchange the enjoyment of the quick or living for the sepulchre of the dead. There is, however, no need to read this verse as an imprecation, it is rather a confident expectation or prophecy: God would, he was sure, desolate them, and cast them out of the land of the living into the regions of the dead. For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them. They are too bad to be spared, for their houses are dens of infamy, and their hearts fountains of mischief. They are a pest to the commonwealth, a moral plague, a spiritual pestilence, to be stamped out by the laws of men and the providence of God. Both Ahithophel and Judas soon ended their own lives; Absalom was hanged in the oak, and the rebels perished in the wood in great numbers. There is justice in the universe, love itself demands it; pity to rebels against God, as such, is no virtue—we pray for them as creatures, we abhor them as enemies of God. We need in these days far more to guard against the disguised iniquity which sympathises with evil, and counts punishment to be cruelty, than against the harshness of a former age. We have steered so far from Scylla that Charybdis is absorbing us.

**Verse 16.** *As for me, I will call upon God.* The psalmist would not endeavour to meet the plots of his adversaries by counterplots, or imitate their incessant violence, but in direct opposition to their godless behaviour would continually resort to his God. Thus Jesus did, and it has been the wisdom of all believers to do the same. As this exemplifies the contrast of their character, so it will foretell the contrast of their end—the righteous shall ascend to their God, the wicked shall sink to ruin. And the Lord shall save me. Jehovah will fulfil my desire, and glorify himself in my deliverance. The psalmist is quite sure. He knows that he will pray, and is equally clear that he will be heard. The covenant name is the pledge of the covenant promise.

**Verse 17.** *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray.* Often but none too often. Seasons of great need call for frequent seasons of devotion. The three periods chosen are most fitting; to begin,

continue, and end the day with God is supreme wisdom. Where time has naturally set up a boundary, there let us set up an altar stone. The psalmist means that he will always pray; he will run a line of prayer right along the day, and track the sun with his petitions. Day and night he saw his enemies busy (Ps 55:10), and therefore he would meet their activity by continuous prayer. And cry aloud. He would give a tongue to his complaint; he would be very earnest in his pleas with heaven. Some cry aloud who never say a word. It is the bell of the heart that rings loudest in heaven. Some read it, "I will nurse and murmur; "deep heart thoughts should be attended with inarticulate but vehement utterances of grief. Blessed be God, moaning is translatable in heaven. A father's heart reads a child's heart. And he shall hear my voice. He is confident that he will prevail; he makes no question that he would be heard, he speaks as if already he were answered. When our window is opened towards heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart and God will have a plenteous hand.

**Verse 18.** *He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me.* The deliverance has come. Joab has routed the rebels. The Lord has justified the cause of his anointed. Faith sees as well as foresees; to her foresight is sight. He is not only safe but serene, delivered in peace—peace in his inmost soul. For there were many with me; many contending against me. Or it may be that he thankfully acknowledges that the Lord raised him up unexpected allies, fetched him succour when he most needed it, and made the friendless monarch once more the head of a great army. The Lord can soon change our condition, and he often does so when our prayers become fervent. The crisis of life is usually the secret place of wrestling. Jabbok makes Jacob a prevailing prince. He who stripped us of all friends to make us see himself in their absence, can give them back again in greater numbers that we may see him more joyfully in the fact of their presence.

**Verse 19.** *God shall hear, and afflict them.* They make a noise as well as I, and God will hear them. The voice of slander, malice, and pride, is not alone heard by those whom it grieves, it reaches to heaven, it penetrates the divine ear, it demands vengeance, and shall have it. God hears and delivers his people, he hears and destroys the wicked. Their cruel jests, their base falsehoods, their cowardly insults, their daring blasphemies are heard, and shall be repaid to them by the eternal judge. Even he that abideth of old. He sits in eternity, enthroned judge for evermore; all the prayers of saints and profanities of sinners are before his judgment seat, and he will see that justice is done. Selah. The singer pauses, overwhelmed with awe in the presence of the everlasting God. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. His own reverential feeling causes him to remember the daring godlessness of the wicked; he feels that his trials have driven him to his God, and he declares that their uninterrupted prosperity was the cause of their living in such neglect of the Most High. It is a very manifest fact that long continued ease and pleasure are sure to produce the worst influences upon graceless men: though troubles do not convert them, yet the absence of them

makes their corrupt nature more readily develop itself. Stagnant water becomes putrid. Summer heat breeds noxious insects. He who is without trouble is often without God. It is a forcible proof of human depravity that man turns the mercy of God into nutriment for sin: the Lord save us from this.

**Verse 20.** The psalmist cannot forget the traitor's conduct, and returns again to consider it. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him. He smites those to whom he had given the hand of friendship, he breaks the bonds of alliance, he is perfidious to those who dwell at ease because of his friendly profession. He hath broken his covenant. The most solemn league he has profaned, he is regardless of oaths and promises.

**Verse 21.** *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter.* He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice. Beware of a man who has too much honey on his tongue; a trap is to be suspected where the bait is so tempting. Soft, smooth, oily words are most plentiful where truth and sincerity are most scarce. But war was in his heart. He brought forth butter in a lordly dish, but he had a tent pin ready for the temples of his guest. When heart and lip so widely differ, the man is a monster, and those whom he assails are afflicted indeed. His words were softer than oil. Nothing could be more unctuous and fluent, there were no objectionable syllables, no jars or discords, his words were as yielding as the best juice of the olive; yet were they drawn swords, rapiers unsheathed, weapons brandished for the fray. Ah! base wretch, to be cajoling your victim while intending to devour him! entrapping him as if he were but a beast of prey; surely, such art thou thyself.

**Verse 22.** *Thy burden,* or what thy God lays upon thee, lay thou it upon the Lord. His wisdom casts it on thee, it is thy wisdom to cast it on him. He cast thy lot for thee, cast thy lot on him. He gives thee thy portion of suffering, accept it with cheerful resignation, and then take it back to him by thine assured confidence. He shall sustain thee. Thy bread shall be given thee, thy waters shall be sure. Abundant nourishment shall fit thee to bear all thy labours and trials. As thy days so shall thy strength be. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. He may move like the boughs of a tree in the tempest, but he shall never be moved like a tree torn up by the roots. He stands firm who stands in God. Many would destroy the saints, but God has not suffered it, and never will. Like pillars, the godly stand immoveable, to the glory of the Great Architect.

**Verse 23.** For the ungodly a sure, terrible, and fatal overthrow is appointed. Climb as they may, *the pit* yawns for them, God himself will cause them to descend into it, and *destruction* there shall be their portion. Bloody and deceitful men, with double iniquity of cruelty and craft upon them, shall not live out half their days; they shall be cut off in their quarrels, or being disappointed in their artifices, vexation shall end them. They were in heart murderers of others, and they became in reality self murderers. Doubt not that virtue lengthens life, and that vice tends to shorten it. But I will trust in thee. A very wise, practical conclusion. We can have no better ground of confidence. The Lord is all, and

more than all that faith can need as the foundation of peaceful dependence. Lord, increase our faith evermore.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** Maschil. This is often prefixed to those Psalms in which David speaks of himself as being chastened by God, inasmuch as the end of chastisement is instruction. *Simon de Muis, 1587-1644.*

**Whole Psalm.** A prayer of the Man Christ in his humiliation, despised and rejected of men, when he was made sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him, when he was about to suffer their punishment, pay their debt, and discharge their ransom. Utter depravity of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; betrayal of Messiah by one of the twelve whom he had ordained to the apostolical office, and who was Messiah's constant attendant in all his ministerial circuits. Premature and punitive death of the traitor Judas, and of others banded together to crucify the Lord of glory. *John Noble Coleman, M.A., in "A Revision of the authorised English Version of the Book of Psalms," 1863.*

**Verse 1.** In the first clause he uses the word *ytkt*, that he might indicate that he merely sought justice from God as a Judge; but in the second he implores the *favour of God*, that if perchance the prayer for *justice* be less becoming to himself as a sinner, God may not deny his grace. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 1.** *Hide not thyself from my supplication.* A figure taken from the conduct of a king who debars an offender from seeing his face (2Sa 14:24), or from an enemy, who conceals himself from the ox, etc.; that is, pretends not to see it, and goes away, leaving it (see De 22:1,3,4 Isa 58:7); or, from a false friend, or an unkind person, who, foreseeing that he may be entreated by a miserable and needy man, will not let himself be seen, but seeks to make his escape. *Martin Geier, 1614-1681.*

**Verse 2.** *I mourn.* As one cast down with sorrow, making a doleful noise. *Henry Ainsworth, 1662.*

**Verse 2.** *I mourn,* etc. A mourning supplicant shall neither lose his prayers nor his tears; for, *I mourn,* is brought for a reason of his hope that God shall attend and hear him. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 2.** *I mourn in my complaint.* The literal translation of these words is, *I will suffer to wander in my thinking; i.e.,* I will let my mind wander, or my thoughts rove as they will. *J. A Alexander.*

**Verse 2.** *In my complaint.* Saints have their complaints on account of their sins and corruptions, their barrenness and unfruitfulness, and the decay of vital religion in them, and because of the low estate of Zion, the declining state of the interest of Christ, and the little success of his gospel; and they mourn, in these complaints, over their own sins, and the sins of others, professors and profane, and under afflictions temporal and spiritual, both their own and the church's. Christ also in the days of his flesh, had his complaints of the perverseness and faithlessness of the generation of men among whom he lived; of the frowardness, pride, and contentions of his disciples; of the reproaches, insult, and injuries of his enemies; and of the dereliction of his God and Father; and he often mourned on

account of one or other of these things, being a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. *John Gill.*

**Verse 2.** *In my complaint.* The word here employed commonly means discourse, meditation. It here occurs in the sense of *complaint*, as in Job 7:13 9:27 21:4 23:2 Ps 142:2 1Sa 1:16. It is not used, however, to denote complaint in the sense of fault finding, complaining, accusing, or the idea that we have been dealt with unjustly. This is not the meaning in this place or in the Scriptures generally. It is the language of a *troubled*, not of an *injured* spirit. *Albert Barnes, 1868.*

**Verse 2.** In confession, when the soul melts into a holy shame and sorrow for the sins he spreads before the Lord, he feels a holy smart and pain within, and doth not act a tragical part with a comical heart. Chrysostom saith, "To paint tears is worse than to paint the face." Here is true fervency, *I mourn in my complaint and make a noise.* There may be fire in the pan when there is none in the piece; a loud wind but no rain with it. David made a noise with his voice, and mourned in his spirit. *William Gurnall, 1617-1679.*

**Verse 3.** *Because of the voice of the enemy,* there is their railing; *because of the oppression of the wicked,* there is their violent robbing him of his estate; *they cast iniquity upon me,* there are their slanderous traducings of him, and charging him with faults falsely; *in wrath they hate me,* there is their cruel seeking to kill. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 3.** *For they cast iniquity upon me.* They tumble it on me, as men do stones or anything else upon their besiegers, to endamage them; so did these sin, shame, anything, upon innocent David, to make him odious. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 4.** *Is sore pained, or, trembled with pain,* The word usually meaneth such *pains as a woman feels in her travail.* *Henry Ainsworth.*

**Verse 4.** *The terrors of death are fallen upon me.* *My heart,* said the afflicted psalmist, *is sore pained within me:* and though I am repeatedly assured of my interest in the divine love and favour, yet now *the terrors of death are fallen upon me.* The case of David is so far from being peculiar to himself, that it portrays, in the most striking colours, a state of mind to which many of the most exemplary Christians are frequently, if not constantly subject. Many, whose hopes are placed on the right foundation, even Christ Jesus, and whose conduct is uniform and consistent, are ye harassed almost continually by the tormenting fears of death... It will be an interesting and useful enquiry to examine into the real causes of a fear, which cultivates melancholy and despondency on the one hand and destroys our happiness on the other. To effect this design I shall consider,

1. The various causes of the fear of death.

2. The arguments calculated to remove it. There are few, indeed, so hardened in the slavery of vice, or so utterly regardless of every admonition, as to consider the awful period of dissolution without some emotions of terror and dismay. There is something so peculiarly awful in the idea of a change hitherto unknown, and of a state hitherto untried, that the most hardy veterans have owned its

tremendous aspects.

One of the first causes of the fear of death is *conscious guilt*. The most hardened are conscious of many things which they may not readily confess; and the most self righteous is conscious of many crimes which he artfully studies to conceal. Whilst the Christian is looking only to his own habits and temper, he may and will be always wretched; but if he looks to the great Surety, Christ Jesus, his gloomy prospect will soon be turned to joy. An *attachment to this world* is also a (second) cause of the fear of death. A principal of self preservation is also a (third) cause of the fear of death. That our bodies, which are pampered by pride and nourished by indulgence, should be consigned to the silent grave, and become even the food of worms, is a humbling reflection to the boasted dignity of man. Besides, nature revolts at the idea of its own dissolution; hence a desire of preserving life, evidently implanted in us. The devil is also (fourthly) often permitted to terrify the consciences of men, and thereby increase at least the fear of death. Unbelief is also a (fifth) cause of the fear of death. Were our faith more frequently in exercise, we should be enabled to look beyond the dreary mansions of the grave with a hope full of immortality. Our fears of death may be often caused by looking for that perfection in ourselves, which we shall never easily discover.

Consider the arguments calculated to remove the fear of death. It may be necessary to premise that the consolations of religion belong only to real Christians; for the wicked have just reason to dread the approach of death. But to such as are humbled under a sense of their own unworthiness, and who have fled to Christ for pardon and salvation, they have no cause to apprehend either the pain or the consequences of death; because first, the sting of death is taken away. Secondly, because death is no longer an enemy but a friend. Instead of threatening us with misery, it invites us to happiness. Thirdly, the safety of our state is founded on the oath, the purpose, and the promises of God. A fourth argument calculated to remove the fear of death, is the consideration of the benefits resulting from it. The benefits which believers receive from Christ at the resurrection also, is a fifth argument calculated to remove the fear of death. *Condensed from a Sermon by John Grove, M.A., F.A.S., 1802.*

**Verses 4-5.** In the version of the Psalter used in the Prayer book, this verse stands with a more homely and expressive simplicity, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and an horrible dread hath overwhelmed me." The fear of death is upon all flesh. It is no sign of manhood to be without it. To overcome it in the way of duty is courage; to meet death with patience is faith; but not to fear it is either a gift of special grace, or a dangerous insensibility. No doubt great saints have been able to say, "I have a desire to depart." And many have rushed to martyrdom as to the love and bosom of their Lord; but for the rest, the multitude of his flock, who are neither wilful sinners nor to be numbered among the saints, the thought of death is a thought of fear. We see that, on the first feeling of their having so much as set

foot in the path leading to the grave, even good men feel "the terror of death, ""a horrible dread, "which makes every pulse to beat with a hurried and vehement speed. Their whole nature, both in body and in soul, trembles to its very centre; and their heart is "disquieted, ""sore pained, "within them. Let us see what are the causes or reasons of this "fear of death." The first must needs be a consciousness of personal sinfulness. A sense of unfitness to meet God, our unreadiness to die, a multitude of personal faults, evil tempers, thoughts, and inclinations; the recollection of innumerable sins, of great omissions and lukewarmness in all religious duties, the little love or gratitude we have to God, and the great imperfections of our repentance; all these make us tremble at the thought of going to give up our account. We feel as if it were impossible we could be saved. Shame, fear, and a "horrible dread" fall upon us. *Henry Edward Manning, M.A., 1850.*

**Verse 5.** *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me.* In this pitiful condition of mind, learn, that it is not a thing inconsistent with godliness to be much moved with fear in time of danger; natural affections are not taken away in conversion, but sanctified and moderated. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Fearfulness.* How natural is this description! He is *in distress*, he *mourns*, *makes a noise*, *sobs and sighs*, his *heart is wounded*, he expects nothing but *death*; this produces *fear*, this produces *tremor*, which terminates in that *deep apprehension* of *approaching* and *inevitable ruin* that *overwhelms* him with *horror*. No man ever described a wounded heart like David. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 6.** *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* Wherever the psalmist cast his eye, the inscription was vanity and vexation. A deluge of sin and misery covered the world, so that like Noah's dove he could find no rest for the sole of his foot below, therefore does he direct his course toward heaven, and say, *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest*; but rest is not a denizen of this world, nothing but the heaven of heavens is at rest, and here does he fix only. *Thomas Sharp (1630-1693), in "Divine Comforts."*

**Verse 6.** *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* King David, though for innocency not only a *dove*, but the phoenix of doves, and so a notable type of Christ, upon whom the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove, yet was his whole life nothing else but *bellum sine induciis*, a perpetual persecution without intermission. Such was also the portion of Christ the Lord of David; and such to the world's end will ever be the lot of those that are the heritage of Christ. My text imports no less; which, taken *historically*, is the voice of David pursued by his enemies; *prophetically*, the voice of Christ at his passion; *mystically*, the voice of that mystical dove, the innocent soul, surrounded and environed with the snares of death; even *generalis quoendam querela* (saith Pellican), a general complaint of the malice of the wicked persecuting the righteous. For (alas that it should be! yet so it is)—

"Non rete accipitri tenditur, neque milvio,

*Qui male facinunt nobis; illis qui nil faciunt tenditur."* *Terence.*

"The net is not pitched for ravenous birds, as are the hawk and the kite; but for poor harmless birds, that never meditate mischief." And

"Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas."

"The dove shall surely be shot at, when the carrion crow shall go shot free." *Juvenal*.

It will then be no news unto you, that here the faithful soul, the spouse, the dove of Christ, when trouble and heaviness take hold upon her, and the floods of Belial compass her about, *Tanquam avis e cave liberari cupit* as St. Austin speaks of the cloistered monks in his time), "Desireth like a bird to be loosed out of her cage." Or, that as Jonas (by interpretation a *dove*, after three days' and three nights' imprisonment in the whale's belly, could not but long after his enlargement. So the dove like soul of man, when not three, but many days, and months, and years, she hath been imprisoned in the body, hath a longing desire to be enlarged, and to fly unto God that made her; and so *mourning* like a dove in devout *supplication*, and *mounting* like a dove in divine *speculation*, breaks forth into these sad elegies: "Oh that I had wings!" and "Alas, that I have not wings! Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have mine habitation among the tents of Kedar. Like as the hart desires the water brook, so longeth my soul to be with thee, O God. I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Who will give me wings?" etc. Which is as if the poor distressed soul, pathetically bemoaning her forlorn estate of pilgrimage, should thus more plentifully enlarge herself. "My spouse is already ascended higher than the winds, than the clouds, than the highest heavens, and I, poor soul, as a husbandless widow, as a tutorless orphan, as a comfortless exile, am left desolate and disconsolate in this valley of tears; none to care for me, none to comfort me, till I have regained him whom I love, and in whom I live. Nay (which worse is), this mine own familiar friend, this nearest and dearest companion of mine, *my body*, is even a burden unto me. The weight of it, and oft the sins that hang so fast on it, doth so clog and shackle me, so glue and nail me to the earth, that I cannot raise or rear up myself towards heaven. Or let him therefore descend to relieve me, being *fila, sponsa, soror*, his daughter, and spouse, and sister; or let him give me wings wherewith I may ascend to him, under the shadow of whose wings I shall surely rest in safety." Ps 16:4. "I must confess it was the very bitterness of extremity that first compelled me to love him, though of himself no less lovely than love itself. It was the sharp sauce of affliction that gave edge to mine affections, and sharpened mine appetite to that 'sweet meat that endureth to everlasting life.' But now, having had some little foretaste of him, I am even in an holy ecstasy, so ravished, so transported with a fervent desire of him and of his presence, that *ubi sum, ibi non sum; ubi non sum, ibi animus est:*" "where I am, there I am not; and where I am not, there am I." For, *anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat:* (Erasmus). "The soul is where it loveth, not where it liveth." Now sigh I not so much for the present dangers, I would decline, as because of my absent love, whom I most desire. *Who will give me wings?* etc. In the scanning of which verse, ye will observe with me,

1. The *efficient* or *author* of these wings—God. *Who will give me? Who? that it, who but God?*

2. The *matter* of the wish—*wings*. "Who will give me wings?"

3. The *form* of those wings—*dove like*. Who will give me wings like unto a dove?

4. The *end mediate*—*flying*. *Then would I fly away.*

5. The *end ultimate*—*resting*. *And be at rest.*

(a) "Who will give me?" There's *Christian humility*.

(b) "Who will give me wings?" There's *prudent celerity*.

(c) "Wings like unto a dove." There's *innocent simplicity*.

(d) "Then would I fly away." There's *devout sublimity*.

(e) "And be at rest." There's *permanent security*.

John Rawlinson, in "The Dove like Soule. A Sermon preached before *the Prince's Highness at Whitehall*, "Feb. 19, 1618.

**Verse 6.** *Oh that I had wings*, etc. Some of the most astounding sermons ever delivered have been preached on this text, which was a very favourite one with the old divines. They ransacked Pliny and Aldrovandus for the most outrageous fables about doves, their eyes, their livers, their crops, and even their dung, and then went on to find emblems of Christians in every fact and fable. Griffith Williams, at considerable length, enlarges upon the fact that David did not desire wings like a grasshopper to hop from flower to flower, as those hasty souls who leap in religion, but do not run with perseverance; nor like an ostrich which keeps to the earth, though it be a bird, as hypocrites do who never mount towards heavenly things; nor like an eagle, or a peacock, or a beetle, or a crow, or a kite, or a bat; and after that he has shown in many ways the similarity between the godly and doves, he refers us to Hugo Cardinalis, and others, for more. We do not think it would be to edification to load these pages with such eccentricities and conceits. This one single sentence, from Bishop Patrick is worth them all, "He rather wished than hoped to escape." He saw no way of escape except by some improbable or impossible means. *C. H. S.*

**Verse 6.** When the Gauls had tasted the wine of Italy, they asked where the grapes grew, and would never be quiet till they came there. Thus may you cry, *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.* A believer is willing to lose the world for the enjoyment of grace; and he is willing to leave the world for the fruition of glory. *William Secker.*

**Verse 6.** *Wings like a dove.* The pigeon, or dove, is one of the swiftest of birds. *The Religious Tract Society's "Book of Psalms, with Preface and Explanatory Notes."*

**Verse 6.** An old writer tells us that it would have been more honourable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them. *William Jay*, 1769-1853.

**Verse 6.** *Dove.* The reference is to the turtle dove, I suppose. Their low, sad complaint may be heard

all day long at certain seasons in the olive groves, and in the solitary and shady valleys among these mountains; I have, however, been more affected by it in the vast orchards round Damascus than anywhere else—so subdued, so very sorrowful among the trees, where the air sighs softly, and little rills roll their melting murmurs down the flowery aisles. These birds can never be tamed. Confined in a cage they droop, and like Cowper, sigh for

"A lodge in some vast wilderness—some boundless contiguity of shade."

and no sooner are they set at liberty than they flee, as a bird, to their mountain. Ps 11:1. David refers to their habits in this respect when his heart was sore pained within him: *Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.* And there you will meet these timid birds far away from the haunts of cruel hunters, of whose society they are peculiarly suspicious. *W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," 1859.*

**Verse 6.** *Oh that I had wings, etc.—*

At first her mother earth she holdeth dear,  
And doth embrace the world and worldly things;  
She flies close by the ground, and hovers there,  
And mounts not up with her celestial wings.  
Yet under heaven she cannot light on ought  
That with heavenly nature doth agree;  
She cannot rest, she cannot fix her thought,  
She cannot in this world contented be:  
Then as a bee which among weeds doth fall,  
Which seem sweet flowers, with lustre fresh and gay;  
She lights on that, and this, and tasteth all,  
But pleased with none, doth rise and soar away;  
So when the Soul finds here no true content;  
And like Noah's dove, can no sure footing take,  
She doth return from whence she first was sent,  
And flies to him that first her wings did make.

—*Sir John Davies, 1569-1626.*

**Verse 7.** *Lo, then would I wander far off, etc.* A passage in the "Octavia" of Seneca has been referred to as being parallel to this of David. It is in the answer of Octavia to the Chorus, act 5., ver. 914-923.

My woes who enough can bewail?  
O what notes can my sorrows express?  
Sweet Philomel's self even would fail  
To respond with her plaintive distress.

O had I her wings, I would fly  
To where sorrows I never should feel more,  
Upborne on her plumes through the sky,  
Regions far from mankind would explore.  
In a grove where sad silence should reign,  
On a spray would I seat me alone;  
In shrill lamentations complain.  
And in wailings would pour forth my moan.

—*J. B. Clarke (From Adam Clarke, in loc.)*

**Verse 8.** *I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.* There was a windy storm and tempest without, and which is worse, a tumult and combustion within in his thoughts. A man may escape from external confusions, but how shall he fly from himself? If he be out of the reach of all the blood suckers on earth, and all the furies in hell, yet be dogged and haunted with his own turbulent, ungovernable cogitations, he needs no other tormentors. This holy man was thus doubly distressed, a storm abroad and an earthquake at home rendered his condition most dolorous; but for both he hath *en mega* he goes not about with the foxes of this world to relieve himself with subtle stratagems and wiles, by carnal shifts and policies, a vanity tosses to and from by them that seek death. No, his one great refuge is to get aloft, to ascend to God. *Thomas Sharp.*

**Verse 9.** *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues.* In the first place, their tongues were truly destroyed and they themselves divided, when the testimony of the two false witnesses agreed not so together. Then secondly, by the contradictory account of the soldiers that kept watch at the sepulchre. *Michael Ayguan (1416) in J. M. Neal's Commentary, 1860.*

**Verse 9.** *Divide their tongues: i.e.,* cause them to give conflicting opinions. *French and Skinner, 1842*

**Verse 10.** *Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.* The city, as Abenezra observes, was like a circle; violence and strife were as a line round about it, and mischief and sorrow the centre of it; and these two commonly go together: where mischief is, sorrow soon follows. *John Gill.*

**Verse 12.** *Then I could have borne it.* It is remarkable that the Lord, who endured the other unspeakable sorrows and agonies of his passion in perfect and marvellous silence, allowed his grief at this one alone to escape him, bewailing himself to his disciples that one of them should betray him, and addressing that one, when he was taken, in these words of reproach—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" *Frau Thome de Jesu, 1582.*

**Verse 12.** *Then I would have hid myself from him.* It is generally easy to get out of the way of an avowed enemy, but how can one be on his guard against a treacherous friend? *A. R. Fausset, in "A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical," 1866.*

**Verse 13.** *A man mine equal.* The LXX here not badly, *isoquce* (of equal soul), Jerome, *unanimus*

*mens* (of one mind). *Hermann Venema*.

**Verse 14.** *We took sweet counsel.* From *qtx to be sweet*, and the ordinary notion of *dwo* for *secret*, the phrase *dwo qytmg* will literally be read, *we made our secret sweet*. And so it may be an elegance, to signify the pleasure of his friendship, or of communicating secrets to him. *Henry Hammond*.

**Verse 14.** The first clause speaks of private intimacy, the next of association in public acts, and especially in the great festivals and processions of the temple. *J. J. Stewart Perowne, 1864*.

**Verse 14.** *In company.* In the end of the verse *vgrk* may be rendered *with a noise*: and so the Chaldee seems to have taken it, which reads *with haste*; and to that agree the Jewish doctors, who tell us men are to go in *haste* and with *speed* to the *synagogue*, but return thence very *leisurely*. *Henry Hammond*.

**Verse 15.** *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.* The last part and end of sinners' lives is worst with them. They have in their lives been busily trading in the world, buying and selling, and getting gain and ruffling it in the world, but meanwhile by their sins they run deep in debt with God, and for want of interest in Christ to be their surety at death (it may be on the sudden) it comes to that of the psalmist, *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell*. Death seizes on them unawares, as a serjeant or pursevant, casts them into prison, which is expressed by their going down quick into hell (as it is said Nu 16:32-33), that Korah and his company did. *Anthony Tuckney, 1599-1670*.

**Verse 15.** *Let death seize upon them* by divine warrant, and let them go quick into hell; let them be dead and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell; for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 15.** *Quick*, that is *alive*, like Korah, Dathan and Abiram. *From "The Psalms chronologically arranged, By Four Friends," 1867*.

**Verse 15.** Throughout this series of Psalms, there appears to be a peculiar penalty attached to each class of transgressions, or, each variety of opposition against God meets a suitable end. The ungodly, that is, the irreligious and indifferent, lay up for themselves an evil recompense when the wrath of God shall be revealed (Ps 54:5): but an instant punishment falls upon false and treacherous professors; as Paul denounced "anathema" against any who perverted the gospel of Christ in the churches of Galatia; so in this Psalm, *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell*, announces the awful judgment of Jehovah, as once it was shown upon Dathan and Abiram; a punishment that will by its suddenness and notoriety at the same time expose the guilt, and make manifest the displeasure of the Almighty against it. *R. H. Ryland, in "The Psalms restored to*

*Messiah," 1853.*

**Verse 17.** *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.* This was the custom of the pious Hebrews. See Da 6:10. The Hebrews began their day in the *evening*, and hence David mentions the *evening first*. The rabbins say, men should pray three times each day because the day changes three times. This was observed in the primitive church; but the times in different places were various. The old Psalter gives this a curious turn: "At *even* I sall tell his louing (*praise*) what the Christ was on the Crosse; and at *morn* I sall schew his louing, what tim he ros fra dede. And sua he sall here my voice at *midday*, that is sitand at the right hand of his fader, wheder he stegh (ascended) at midday." *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 17.** *Evening and morning, etc.* The three principle parts of the day are mentioned, not as marking special times set apart for prayer, but as a poetical expression for "the whole day, ""at all times, ""without ceasing." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 17.** If our poor, frail bodies need refreshment from food three times a day, who, that knows his own weakness, will say that we need not as frequent refreshment for our poor frail spirits? *William S. Plumer, 1867.*

**Verse 17.** I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer, who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can believe that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath, who neglects to keep that one which God hath appointed. *William Gurnall, 1617-1679.*

**Verse 17.** There is no limited time in the court of heaven for hearing petitions. It is not like the court of earthly princes, for there is a free access any day of the week, any hour of the day, or the night, any minute of the hour. As the lawyer saith of the king, for having his due, *Nullum tempus occurrit regi*: so may I say of the godly, for making his prayers and granting his requests, *Nullum tempus occurrit fidelibus*, no time unseasonable, so the heart be seasoned with faith; no *non term* in God's court of requests. He keeps continually open house for all comers and goers; and indeed, most for comers, then goers. His eyes are always open to behold our tears; his ears are always open to hear our groans; his heart also and his bowels are always open, and never shut up so fast, but they will yearn and turn within him, if our misery be never so little. For as we have not an High Priest to pray by "that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; "so neither have we a God to pray to, that shall see us in distress, and hear us call and cry, and never be moved. *Zachary Bogan (1625-1659), in "Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life."*

**Verse 17.** *And cry aloud.* The word here employed properly means to murmur; to make a humming sound; to sigh; to growl; to groan. Here the language means that he would give utterance to his deep feelings in appropriate tones—whether words, sighs, or groans. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 17.** *And he shall hear.* And what will this loud cry obtain? A hearing without doubt, so he assures himself, *He shall hear me.* Not that God hears any prayers whether he will or no (as men

sometimes do that upon importunity which they have no mind to), but he hath no will, no mind not to hear such prayers, the prayers of those who cry aloud to him. *Joseph Caryl*, 1602-1673.

**Verse 18.** *He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle.* In the midst of war the Lord can keep a man as safe as in the time of peace, and in extreme perils preserve him from danger. He that depends upon God in the time of trouble, albeit he had an host against him, yet hath he more with him when God is with him, than can be against him. *David Dickson*.

**Verse 18.** *For.* The *for* implies the reason why God interposed to deliver him; namely, because of the general principle that God ministers relief when his people come to an extremity. *A. R. Fausset*.

**Verse 18.** *There were many with me.* This is doubtful whether it be meant of *foes* or *friends*. If of *foes*, it may be resolved thus: *for with many* (with a great multitude) *they were fighters with me*. If of *friends*, it may be understood of God's *angels*, that *in a great number were with him*, pitching camp for his aid (Ps 34:7); as Elisha said, "Many more are with us than with them." 2Ki 6:16-17. The Chaldee explains it, "For in many afflictions his word was for my help." *Henry Ainsworth*.

**Verse 19.** *Even he that abideth of old.* The deeds by which God had already showed himself from of old as the righteous King and Judge, the judgments, for example, upon the wicked in the land of Shinar (Ps 55:9), the company of Korah (Ps 55:9,18), the cities of the plain (Ps 55:15), pledge his still ready interposition. He who had already so long held the throne, must now also show himself as King and Judge; he cannot now, at so late a period, be another. *E. W. Hengstenberg*, 1845.

**Verse 19.** *Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* That is, there is no new thing among them, no extraordinary providential turns, no judiciary changes, their prosperity keeps a settled course, and because they find all things going on in the old course of providence, therefore they go on in their old course of sinfulness, *they fear not God*; intimating, that as such *changes* always should, so usually they do, awaken fear; and that, if the Lord would but change, and toss, and tumble them about, by various troublesome dispensations, surely they would fear him. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 19.** *Because they have no changes, etc.* Or, *with whom also there be no changes, yet they fear not God.* If *changes* be referred to their temporal estates and welfare, as Job 10:17 (it is the same word there as here, *twkylx*), "changes and war are against me:" then, according to the first translation, *because etc.*, a reason is given of their perseverance in wickedness, and contempt of God; to wit, their constant and uninterrupted worldly prosperity. Or, according to the second, *With whom there are no changes, yet, etc.*; it is a great aggravation of their impenitency, that notwithstanding so much goodness vouchsafed unto them, they should continue so unthankful as to requite so ill, or so stupid and insensible as not to acknowledge the author. But if *changes* be referred, as by many, to the soul, then the meaning is—that through long use and continuance of sinning, they are, through God's just judgment, become altogether obdurate and inflexible; and therefore, no wonder if nothing work upon them to their conversion. "Can the Ethiopian change his

skin?" etc. Jer 13:23. But this *changes* might also have another meaning. The Grecians used to say, *streptai esylwn*, that the minds or hearts of good men are changeable; their meaning is, that good men are merciful. *Quos quisque est major, magis est placabilis ira: et faciles motus mens generosa capit*, as the Latin proverb expresses it. He may therefore say, that they show by their cruel unmercifulness, that they have no fear or sense of God at all; else they would fear him, of whose mercy themselves stood in so much need, and consider that they whom they so fiercely persecute are his creatures as well as they. *Westminster Assembly's Annotations*.

**Verse 19.** *They have no changes*, etc. Who are they who have no changes? Apparently those whom God is said to humble or chastise. And what is the meaning of the word, *changes* as here used? Many understand it of a moral change; "who are without change of heart or reformation." But the word never occurs in this sense. It means, properly, "*a change*" in the sense of *succession*; as of garments, of troops relieving guard, servants leaving work, and the like. Hence it would rather mean in a moral sense: "They who have no cessation in their course (by being relieved guard, for instance), who always continue, and persevere in their evil life." Calvin and others understand it of *change of fortune*, *i.e.*, "who are always prosperous; "but this again is not supported by usage. *J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

**Verse 19.** *They fear not God*. The fear required here, is to fear him as God, and as God presented in this name, *Elohim*; which though it be a name primarily rooted in power and strength (for *EI* is Deus fortis, The powerful God; and as there is no love without fear, so there is no fear without power), yet properly it signifies his judgment, and order, and providence, and dispensations and government of his creatures. It is that name which goes through all God's whole work of the creation, and disposition of all creatures in the first of Genesis: in all that he is called by no other name than this, the name God; not by Jehovah, to present an infinite majesty; nor by Adonai, to present an absolute power; nor by Tzebaoth, to present a force, or conquest; but only the name of God, his name of government. All ends in this; to fear God is to adhere to him, in his way, as he hath dispensed and notified himself to us; that is, as God is manifested in Christ, in the Scriptures, and applied to us out of those Scriptures, by the church: not to rest in nature without God, nor in God without Christ. *John Donne*, 1573-1631.

**Verse 21.** *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter*, etc. Of this complexion are the cant of hypocrites, the charity of bigots and fanatics, the benevolence of atheists, the professions of the world, the allurements of the flesh, and the temptations of Satan, when he thinks proper to appear in the character of an angel of light. *George Horne*, 1730-1792.

**Verse 21.** *Butter*. The Eastern butter is by no means like the solid substance, which is known by that name in these colder climates; but is liquid and flowing as appears from different passages in Scripture, particularly Job 29:6 20:17; and as is confirmed by the accounts of modern travellers; so that in fact it more resembles "cream," which Vitringa says is the genuine sense of the word here

used. *Richard Mant*, 1776-1849.

**Verse 21.** To avoid all difficulties, the readiest expedient is to receive the Septuagint rendering of *wqlx diemerisyhsan*, *they were, or are divided*, viz., the *members* of the wicked man there spoken of, they are at great distance one from the other; *wyk tamxm*, *butter their mouth, or their mouth is butter*, *wklkrqw* and *war their heart, or their heart is war*; and this seems to be the fairest rendering of it. *Henry Hammond*, 1605-1660.

**Verse 21.** A feigned friend is much like a crocodile who, when he smiles, poisons; and when he weepeth, devoureth; or the hyaena, having the voice of a man and the mind of a wolf, speaking like a friend and devouring like a fiend; or the flattering sirens that sweetly sing the sailor's wreck; or the fowler's pipe that pleasantly playeth the bird's death; or the bee, who carrieth honey in her mouth and a sting in her tail; or the box tree, whose leaves are always green, but the seeds poison. So his countenance is friendly and his words pleasant, but his intent dangerous, and his deeds unwholesome.

His fetch is to flatter, to catch what he can;

His purpose obtained, a fig for his man.

—*L. Wright*, 1616.

**Verse 21.** *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.* Well, when I came to the justice again, there was Mr. Foster, of Bedford, who coming out of another room, and seeing me by the light of the candle, for it was dark night when I came thither, he said unto me, "Who is there? John Bunyan?" with much seeming affection, as if he would have leaped in my neck and kissed me, (A right Judas.), which made me somewhat wonder that such a man as he, with whom I had so little acquaintance, and, besides, that had ever been a close opposer of the ways of God, should carry himself so full of love to me, but afterwards when I saw what he did, it caused me to remember those sayings, *Their tongues were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords*, and again, "Beware of men," etc. When I had answered him that, blessed be God, I was well, he said, "What is the occasion of your being here?" or to that purpose. To whom I answered that I was at a meeting of people a little way off, intending to speak a word of exhortation to them; but the justice hearing thereof (said I) was pleased to send his warrant to fetch me before him, etc.—John Bunyan. In relation to J.B.'s imprisonment: written by *himself*. *Offor's edit.*, Vol. 1. p. 52.

**Verse 21.** (*first clause*).—

Smooth are his words, his voice as honey sweet,

Yet war was in his heart, and dark deceit. *Moschus* (*B.C. 250.*)

**Verse 22.** *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*, etc. The remedy which the Psalm suggests, and, perhaps, the only resource in a difficulty of the kind, where the enemies of true religion are fighting under the

semblance of friendship, is announced in an oracular voice from God: "Cast thy care upon Jehovah, for he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the just one to be tossed about for ever." *R. H. Ryland.*

**Verse 22.** *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, etc.* The best way to ease thyself is to lay thy load upon God; he will take it up and also carry thee. There is many a man would be willing to go of himself if another would but carry his burden for him; but if you throw your burden upon God he will not only carry that, but will also carry you. He cares not how much weight a Christian layeth on his back; a true Israelite may ease himself, and best please his God at once. God delights not to see tears in thine eyes, or paleness in thy countenance; thy groans and sighs make no music in his ears. He had rather that thou wouldst free thyself of thy burden by casting it upon him, that he might rejoice in thy joy and comfort. Now, true confidence in God, and resting upon God, will both free thee of thy burden and also bring in the strength of God to sustain and bear thee up from falling. Wouldst thou, therefore, own God as thy strength, and fetch strength from God to thy soul? rest upon God, roll thyself upon him, and that

1. In time of greatest weakness.
2. In time of greatest service.
3. In times of greatest trials.

—*Samuel Blackerby, 1674.*

**Verse 22.** *Cast thy burden upon him in the same way that the ship in a storm casts her burden on the anchor, which anchor holds on to its sure fixing place. And to my mind, that is the more beautiful sense of the two—a sense which once entered into, may be followed out in these glorious verses:*

And I see the good ship riding, all in a perilous road; The low reef booming on her lee; the swell of ocean poured Sea after sea, from stem to stern; the mainmast by the board; The bulwarks down; the rudder gone; the boats stove by the chains. But courage still, brave mariners, the ANCHOR yet remains: And he will flinch—no, never an inch—until ye pitch sky high; Then he moves his head, as if he said, "Fear nought; for here am I!" —*J. M. Neale's Commentary.*

**Verse 23.** *Shalt bring them down.* Indicating a violent death, like that of the slain ox, which is said to *descend*, when it falls under the stroke. The *pit of putrefaction* is meant, in which the corpse decays, nor does it here merely denote the sepulchre, but the ignominious condition of a corpse cast forth, as when it is thrown into a pit. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 23.** *Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* A wicked man never lives out half his days; for either he is cut off before he hath lived half the course of nature, or he is cut off before he hath lived a quarter of the course of his desires; either he lives not half so long as he would; and therefore let him die when he will, his death is full of terror, trouble, and confusion, because he dies out of season. He never kept time or season with God, and surely God will not keep or regard his time or season. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 23.** *Half their days.* In the Jewish account threescore years was the age of a man, and death at any time before that was looked upon as untimely, and deemed and styled *trd excision*, of which they made thirty-six degrees; so that *not to live out half one's days*, is in their style *to die before thirty years old.* Henry Hammond.

**Verse 23.** (*second clause*). The more sins we do commit, the more we hasten our own death; because as the wise man saith, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Pr 10:27); and the prophet David saith, *Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*; for sin is an epitomiser or shortener of everything: it consumes our wealth, it confines our liberty, it impeaches our health, and it abbreviates our life, and brings us speedily unto our grave. Griffith Williams, 1636.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** (*second clause*).

1. An evil to be dreaded: *Hide not thyself*, etc.

(a) By long delay in an urgent case.

(b) In the sinner's case by refusing to hear altogether.

2. Causes which may produce it.

(a) In the man.

(b) In the prayer itself.

(c) In the manner of the prayer.

3. Evils which will follow a list which the preacher can readily think of.

4. Remedies for the evil. There is none of it should continue; but heart searching, repentance, importunity, pleading the name of Jesus, etc., will lead to its removal.

**Verse 2.** The Great Hearer.

1. What address shall we present to him?

2. What sort of attention do we desire?

3. How shall we secure it?

4. What is the reflex duty on our part? To attend and hear him.

**Verse 2.** (*second clause*). Allowable complaining.

1. Not of God but to God.

2. Mainly of ourselves.

3. Of the world as against God and right.

4. Ever with holy grief, and not selfish vexation.

**Verse 4.** The terrors of death. See Sermon by Grove in the Notes.

**Verse 7.** Solitude.

1. Its fancied benefits.
2. Its sore temptations.
3. Its occasional benefits.
4. Its sweet solaces.

**Verse 8.** Too hasty a flight from trial.

1. Would show rebellion against God.
2. Would manifest cowardly want of faith.
3. Would involve loss of useful experience.
4. Would land us in other and worse trials.
5. Would prevent our glorifying God.
6. Would mar our conformity to Christ and fellowship with his people.
7. Would lessen the value of heaven.

**Verse 9.** (*first clause*). The Babel of heresies. *Essential*, for truth is one. *Inevitable*, for the motives of heretics clash. *Providential*, for so they weaken each other. *Judicial*, for so they torment each other.

**Verse 10.** (*first clause*). The activity of evil.

**Verse 10.** (*second clause*). The diabolical twins, or cause and effect.

**Verse 14.** The social companionships which grow out of religion.

1. They are on a good foundation.
2. They yield profit—*counsel*.
3. They yield pleasure—*sweet*.
4. They lead to enthusiasm—*walked in company*.
5. They ought to be sacredly maintained.
6. But they need to be carefully watched.

**Verse 16.** The contrast.

1. A child of God will not wrong others as they do him.
2. He will call upon God as they do not.
3. God will hear him as he does not the wicked.
4. God will deal with him at last otherwise than with them.

**Verse 17.**

1. David will pray fervently; *I will pray and cry aloud*.
2. He will pray frequently; every day, and three times a day, evening, and morning, and at noon.

*Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 18.** Our battles, our almost rout, our helper, our deliverances, our praise.

**Verse 19.** The eternal government of God a threat to the ungodly.

**Verse 19.** (*second part*). Prosperity creating atheism. This involves—

1. Ingratitude—they ought to be the more devout.
2. Impudence—they think themselves as God.
3. Forgetfulness—they forget that changes will come.
4. Ignorance—they know not that unbroken prosperity is often for awhile the portion of the accursed.
5. Insanity—for there is no reason in their conduct.
6. Rottenness—preparing them to be cast away for ever.

**Verse 21.** The hypocrite's mouth.

1. It has many words.
2. They are only from his mouth.
3. They are very smooth.
4. They conceal rather than reveal his purpose.
5. They are cutting and killing.
6. They will kill himself.

**Verse 22.** (*first clause*). Here we see the believer has—

1. A *burden* to try him.
2. A *duty* to engage him, "Cast thy burden, "etc.
3. A *promise* to encourage him, "He shall sustain, "etc. *Ebenezer Temple, 1850.*

**Verse 22.** (*last clause*). Who are the righteous? What is meant by their being moved? Whose permission is needful to accomplish it? Will he give it? "Never." Why not?

**Verse 23.** (*last clause*). The grand "I WILL." Sum up the Psalm.—

1. When I pray, Ps 55:1-3.
2. When I faint, Ps 55:4-7.
3. When I am sore beset, Ps 55:9-11.
4. When I am betrayed, Ps 55:12-14,20-21.
5. When others perish, Ps 55:15.
6. After I am delivered, Ps 55:18.
7. In every condition, Ps 55:22.

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#### WORK UPON THE FIFTY-FIFTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S "*Life of David*," Vol. 2., pp. 305-315, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

#### **Psalm 56**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

## Other Works

**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician.* That mighty minstrel by degrees acquired a noble repertoire of hallowed songs, and set them all to music. *Upon Jonathelemrechokim*—this was probably the title of the tune, as we should say Old Hundred, or Sicilian Mariners. Perhaps the title may however belong to the Psalm, and if so it is instructive, for it has been translated "the silent dove in distant places." We have here the songs of God's servant, who rejoices once more to return from banishment, and to leave those dangerous places where he was compelled to hold his peace even from good. There is such deep spiritual knowledge in this Psalm that we might say of it, "Blessed art thou David Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." When David plays the Jonah he is not like the prophet of that name; in David the love of the dove predominates, but in Jonah its moaning and complaining are most notable. Michtam of David. This is the second golden Psalm, we had the first in Psalm 16, to which this Psalm has a great likeness, especially in its close, for it ends in the joyful presence. A golden mystery, the gracious secret of the life of faith is in both these Psalms most sweetly unveiled, and a pillar is set up because of God's truth. *When the Philistines took him in Gath.* He was like a dove in strangers' hands, and on his escape he records his gratitude.

**DIVISION.** In Ps 56:1-2, he pours out his complaint; in Ps 56:3-4 he declares his confidence in God; in Ps 56:5-6 he returns to his complaining, but pleads in earnest hope in Ps 56:7-9, and sings a grateful song from Ps 56:10 to the close.

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me, O God.* In my deep distress my soul turns to thee, my God. Man has no mercy on me, therefore double thy mercy to me. If thy justice has let loose my enemies, let thy mercy shorten their chain. It is sweet to see how the tender dove like spirit of the psalmist flies to the most tender attribute for succour in the hour of peril. For man would swallow me up. He is but thy creature, a mere man, yet like a monster he is eager for blood, he pants, he gapes for me; he would not merely wound me, or feed on my substance, but he would fain swallow me altogether, and so make an end of me. The open mouths of sinners when they rage against us should open our mouths in prayer. We may plead the cruelty of men as a reason for the divine interposition—a father is soon aroused when his children are shamefully entreated. He fighting daily oppresseth me. He gives me no interval—he fights daily. He is successful in his unrighteous war—he oppresses me, he crushes me, he presses me sore. David has his eye on the leader of his foes, and lays his complaint against him in the right place. If we may thus plead against man, much more against that great enemy of souls, the devil. We ask the Lord to forgive us our trespasses, which is another way of saying, "Be merciful to me, O God," and then we may say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the

evil one." The more violent the attack of Satan the stronger our plea for deliverance.

**Verse 2.** *Mine enemies would daily swallow me up.* Their appetite for blood never fails them. With them there is no truce or armistice. They are many, but one mind animates them. Nothing I can do can make them relent. Unless they can quite devour me they will never be content. The ogres of nursery tales exist in reality in the enemies of the church, who would crush the bones of the godly, and make a mouthful of them if they could. For they be many that fight against me. Sinners are gregarious creatures. Persecutors hunt in packs. These wolves of the church seldom come down upon us singly. The number of our foes is a powerful plea for the interposition of the one Defender of the faithful, who is mightier than all their bands. These foes of the gracious are also keen eyed, and ever on the watch, hence the margin calls them "observers." O thou most High. Thus he invokes against the lofty ones of the earth the aid of one who is higher than the highest. Some translate the words differently, and think that the writer means that his foes assailed him from the high places in which pride and power had placed them. Saul, his great foe, attacked him from his throne with all the force which his high position placed at his disposal: our comfort in such a case is near to hand, for God will help us from a higher place than our proudest foes can occupy. The greatness of God as the Most High is a fertile source of consolation to weak saints oppressed by mighty enemies.

**Verse 3.** *What time I am afraid.* David was no braggart, he does not claim never to be afraid, and he was no brutish Stoic free from fear because of the lack of tenderness. David's intelligence deprived him of the stupid heedlessness of ignorance, he saw the imminence of his peril, and was afraid. We are men, and therefore liable to overthrow; we are feeble, and therefore unable to prevent it; we are sinful men, and therefore deserving it, and for all these reasons we are afraid. But the condition of the psalmist's mind was complex—he feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds, I will trust in thee. It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. We are strange beings, and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight, where light and darkness are both present, and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. If I fear man I have only to trust God, and I have the best antidote. To trust when there is no cause for fear, is but the name of faith, but to be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant and pressing, is the conquering faith of God's elect. Though the verse is in the form of a resolve, it became a fact in David's life, let us make it so in ours. Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals, or spirituals, from men or devils, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage.

**Verse 4.** *In God I will praise his word.* Faith brings forth praise. He who can trust will soon sing. God's promise, when fulfilled, is a noble subject for praise, and even before fulfilment it should be the theme of song. It is in or through God that we are able to praise. We praise as well as pray in the Spirit. Or

we may read it—in extolling the Lord one of the main points for thanksgiving is his revealed will in the Scriptures, and the fidelity with which he keeps his word of promise. In God I have put my trust. Altogether and alone should we stay ourselves on God. What was a gracious resolve in the former verse, is here asserted as already done. I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. Faith exercised, fear is banished, and holy triumph ensues, so that the soul asks, "What can flesh do unto me?" What indeed? He can do me no real injury; all his malice shall be overruled for my good. Man is flesh, flesh is grass—Lord, in thy name I defy its utmost wrath. There were two verses of complaint, and here are two of confidence; it is well to weigh out a sufficient quantity of the sweet to counteract the sour.

**Verse 5.** *Every day they wrest my words.* This is a common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our language on the rack, they extort meanings from it which it cannot be made fairly to contain. Thus our Saviour's prophecy concerning the temple of his body, and countless accusations against his servants, were founded on wilful perversions. They who do this every day become great adepts in the art. A wolf can always find in a lamb's discourse a reason for eating him. Prayers are blasphemies if you choose to read them the wrong way upwards. All their thoughts are against me for evil. No mixture of good will tone down their malice. Whether they viewed him as a king, a psalmist, a man, a father, a warrior, a sufferer, it was all the same, they saw through coloured glass, and could not think a generous thought towards him. Even those actions of his which were an undoubted blessing to the commonwealth, they endeavoured to undervalue. Oh, foul spring, from which never a drop of pure water can come!

**Verse 6.** *They gather themselves together.* Firebrands burn the fiercer for being pushed together. They are afraid to meet the good man till their numbers place terrible odds against him. Come out, ye cowards, man to man, and fight the old hero! No, ye wait till ye are assembled like thieves in bands, and even then ye waylay the man. There is nothing brave about you. They hide themselves. In ambuscade they wait their opportunity. Men of malice are men of cowardice. He who dares not meet his man on the king's highway, writes himself down a villain. Constantly are the reputations of good men assailed with deep laid schemes, and diabolical plots, in which the anonymous enemies stab in the dark. They mark my steps, as hunters mark the trail of their game, and so track them. Malicious men are frequently very sharp sighted to detect the failings, or supposed failings, of the righteous. Spies and *mouchards* are not all in the pay of earthly governments, some of them will have wages to take in red hot coin from one who himself is more subtle than all the beasts of the field. When they wait for my soul. Nothing less than his life would content them, only his present and eternal ruin could altogether glut them. The good man is no fool, he sees that he has enemies, and that they are many and crafty; he sees also his own danger, and then he shows his wisdom by spreading the whole case before the Lord, and putting himself under divine protection.

**Verse 7.** *Shall they escape by iniquity?* Will such wickedness as this stand them in good stead? Can

it be that this conduct shall enable them to avoid the sentence of earthly punishment? They slander the good man to screen themselves—will this avail them? They have cunningly managed hitherto, but will there not be an end to their games? In thine anger cast down the people, O God. Trip them up in their tricks. Hurl them from the Tarpeian rock. A persecuted man finds a friend even in an angry God, how much more in the God of love! When men seek to cast us down, it is but natural and not at all unlawful to pray that they may be disabled from the accomplishment of their infamous designs. What God often does we may safely ask him to do.

**Verse 8.** *Thou tellest my wanderings.* Every step which the fugitive had taken when pursued by his enemies, was not only observed but thought worthy of counting and recording. We perhaps are so confused after a long course of trouble, that we hardly know where we have or where we have not been; but the omniscient and considerate Father of our spirits remembers all in detail; for he has counted them over as men count their gold, for even the trial of our faith is precious in his sight. Put thou my tears into thy bottle. His sorrows were so many that there would need a great wineskin to hold them all. There is no allusion to the little complimentary lachrymators for fashionable and fanciful Romans, it is a more robust metaphor by far; such floods of tears had David wept that a leathern bottle would scarce hold them. He trusts that the Lord will be so considerate of his tears as to store them up as men do the juice of the vine, and he hopes that the place of storage will be a special one—*thy bottle*, not a bottle. Are they not in thy book? Yes, they are recorded there, but let not only the record but the grief itself be present to thee. Look on my griefs as real things, for these move the heart more than a mere account, however exact. How condescending is the Lord! How exact his knowledge of us! How generous his estimation! How tender his regard!

**Verse 9.** *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back.* So soon as I pray they shall fly. So surely as I cry they shall be put to the rout.

"So swift is prayer to reach the sky,  
So kind is God to me."

The machinery of prayer is not always visible, but it is most efficient. God inclines us to pray, we cry in anguish of heart, he hears, he acts, the enemy is turned back. What irresistible artillery is this which wins the battle as soon as its report is heard! What a God is this who harkens to the cry of his children, and in a moment delivers them from the mightiest adversaries! This I know. This is one of the believer's certainties, his axioms, his infallible, indisputable verities. For God is for me. This, we know, and we know, therefore, that none can be against us who are worth a moment's fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who will restrain prayer when it is so potent? Who will seek any other ally than God, who is instantly present so soon as we give the ordained signal, by which we testify both our need and our confidence?

**Verse 10.** *In God will I praise his word.* Now comes the thanksgiving. He is a wretch who, having

obtained help, forgets to return a grateful acknowledgment. The least we can do is to praise him from whom we receive such distinguished favours. Does David here mean "by God's grace I will praise him"? If so, he shows us that all our emotions towards God must be in God, produced by him and presented as such. Or does he mean, "that which in God is most the object of my praise is his word, and the faithfulness with which he keeps it"? If so, we see how attached our hearts should be to the sure word of promise, and especially to *him* who is the WORD incarnate. The Lord is to be praised under every aspect, and in all his attributes and acts, but certain mercies peculiarly draw out our admiration towards special portions of the great whole. That praise which is never special in its direction cannot be very thoughtful, and it is to be feared cannot be very acceptable. In the Lord will I praise his word. He delights to dwell on his praise, he therefore repeats his song. The change by which he brings in the glorious name of Jehovah is doubtless meant to indicate that under every aspect he delights in his God and in his word.

**Verse 11.** *In God have I put my trust.* This and the former verse are evidently the chorus of the Psalm. We cannot be too careful of our faith, or see too sedulously that it is grounded on the Lord alone. I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Faith has banished fear. He views his foes in their most forcible character, calling them not *flesh*, but indicating them as *man*, yet he dreads them not; though the whole race were his enemies he would not be afraid now that his trust is stayed on God. He is not afraid of what they threaten to do, for much of that they cannot do; and even what is in their power, what they *can do*, he defies with holy daring. He speaks for the future, "I will not," for he is sure that the security of the present will suffice for days to come.

**Verse 12.** *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* Vows made in his trouble he does not lightly forget, nor should we. We voluntarily made them, let us cheerfully keep them. All professed Christians are men under vows, but especially those who in hours of dire distress have rededicated themselves unto the Lord. I will render praises unto thee. With heart, and voice, and gift, we should cheerfully extol the God of our salvation. The practice of making solemn vows in times of trouble is to be commended, when it is followed by the far less common custom of fulfilling them when the trouble is over.

**Verse 13.** *For thou hast delivered my soul from death.* His enemies were defeated in their attempts upon his life, and therefore he vowed to devote his life to God. Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling? One mercy is a plea for another, for indeed it may happen that the second is the necessary complement of the first. It little boots that we live, if we are made to fall in character by the thrusts of our enemies. As lief not be, as live to be bereft of honour, and fallen prostrate before my enemies. That I may walk before God in the light of the living, enjoying the favour and presence of God, and finding the joy and brightness of life therein. Walking at liberty, in holy service, in sacred communion, in constant progress in holiness, enjoying the smile of heaven—this I seek after. Here is the loftiest reach of a good man's ambition, to dwell with God, to walk in righteousness before him, to rejoice in

his presence, and in the light and glory which it yields. Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** The words *Jonathelemrechokim* may be rendered, *concerning the mute dove among them that are afar off, or in far places.* *John Gill.*

**Title.** *Michtam.* See also Explanatory Notes on Psalm 16, in the "Treasury of David," Vol. 1, pp., 222-223.

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful.* This is the second of the Psalms beginning with the miserere; the fifty-first being the first of them. *C. H. S.*

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me, O God.* This is to me the one source of all my expectations, the one fountain of all promises: *Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei.* *Bernard, 1091-1157.*

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful.* His first wrestling in prayer is with the check of his conscience, whether for his daily sins, or in particular for casting himself in such apparent danger, as to have ventured without probable security, to seek shelter among the enemies of the people of God, whose blood he himself had shed abundantly; for this rashness or other sins he begs mercy. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 1.** *Man.* He uses the indefinite term *man* in this verse, though in the next he speaks of having many enemies, the more forcibly to express the truth, that the whole world was combined against him, that he experienced no humanity amongst men, and stood in the last necessity of divine help. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 1.** *Would swallow me up. Soop me up* (as the Hebrew word soundeth); make but one draught of me, or suck me in as a whirlpool, swallow me up as a ravenous wild beast. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 1.** *He fighting daily.* There is no morning on which we can arise and go forth into the world, and say, "No enemy will come out against me today." There is no night in which we can retire from that world, and think to find safety in the solitude of our own chambers, and say, "No evil can enter here." *Barton Bouchier, in "Manna in the Heart," 1855.*

**Verses 1-2.** The same words are applicable to the situation and circumstances of David, pursued by his enemies; of Christ, persecuted by the Jews; of the church, afflicted in the world; and of the soul, encompassed by enemies, against whom she is forced to wage perpetual war. *George Horne.*

**Verse 2.** *O thou most High.* The Hebrew is not that rendered *Most High* in Ps 7:17; nor in our version is it ever rendered *Most High* in any other place, although found in the Hebrew Bible more than *fifty* times. There are but two other places where it is applied, as an epithet, to God; Ps 92:8; Mic 6:6. It is commonly rendered, *from above, on high, high places, high; once loftily, Ps 73:8...* The probable meaning is, they "fight against me from the high places of authority, both in Jerusalem and in Gath,

"*q.d.*, mine enemies are in power. *William S. Plumer's "Studies in the Book of Psalms,* "1867.

**Verse 3.** *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know that your time for believing is always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all the day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe. "At what time," said the good man, "I am afraid, I will trust in thee." *John Bunyan.*

**Verse 3.** *What time I am afraid,* etc. A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look and sends forth a cry to his Saviour, acknowledging his sufficiency; Mt 14:30, "Lord, save me." Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust and make us take hold faster on God. Ps 56:3. *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is a relying upon God), not like a boat carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a Comforter against such fears and to expel those thick fumes of nature. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 3.** *What time I am afraid,* etc. I know not what to do, but I will try my old way, it is good for me to draw near still; I will do so still, as I used to do; I will cast myself down upon the free grace of Christ in the promises; I will lay the weight of my sinking spirit there, I will renew my hold, life, expectation there; this is my old path, I will never be turned or beaten out here. This Christian in his strength may challenge all the gates of hell. This was David's course (Ps 71:5), "Thou art my trust from my youth," etc. Thence was it that he could say, *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee:* his shield and sword was always in his hand, therefore he could make use of it when fear and inward trouble offered themselves. *Afraid!* alas, who is not? but what course will you take then? Even what course you used to take, *i.e.*, believe; use faith always; and have it now. *Elias Pledger(-1676), in "Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 3.** *What time,* etc. Literally, *What day.* As "Man *daily* oppresseth me" (Ps 56:1), so "Every *day,* when I am afraid, I trust in thee." *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 3.** It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment—*What time I am afraid, I WILL TRUST IN*

*THEE. Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 3.** *I will trust in thee.* Faith and fear stand together; and so fear and love. *John Richardson, -1654.*

**Verses 3-4.** Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria.* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So Hannah prayed, "and was no more sad." 1Sa 1:18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in David. *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,* and in the next words, *In God I will praise his word;* that is, he would praise God for his promise before there was any performance of it in him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness and David's faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, that he could see the promise when he was at the lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that he could then praise God as if the promised mercy had been actually fulfilled to him. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 4.** *In God I will praise his word.* Or, praise him for his word; for the whole Scripture that was then in being. *John Gill.*

**Verse 4.** The best hold that faith can have of God, is to take him by *his word,* however his dispensation seems to be; this will give satisfaction at length; for *In God I will praise his word,* is as much as to say, albeit he withhold comfort and deliverance from me, so that I cannot find what I would, yet let me have *his word,* and I will give him the glory of all his attributes. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* Fear not man, he is but flesh. Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What, not such a great man; not such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle; who can kill or save alive? No, not these; only look they be thy enemies for righteousness sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy, by offering wrong to him; God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain that the Christian sin made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious: *Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari.* But if man's wrath find thee on God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear though thy life be the prey he hunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh; he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldest thou fear to be stripped of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? It is the first lesson you learn, if a Christian, to deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow thy Master; so that the enemy comes too late; thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ; nor can man take away that without God's leave; all thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear the loss, yea, to pay thee a hundredfold, and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to

fear flesh. Our Saviour (Matthew 10) thrice, in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man: if thy heart quail at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the last against Satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had *arma proelusoria*, weapons rebated or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgels and blunt weapons, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have Satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid sanctify the Lord, not to fear their fear. *William Gurnall*.

**Verse 4.** *I will not fear*, etc. Eusebius tells us of a notable speech that Ignatius used when he was in his enemies' hands, not long before he was to suffer, which argued a raised spirit to a wonderful height above the world, and above himself. "I care," says he, "for nothing visible or invisible, that I might get Christ. Let fire, the cross, the letting out of beasts upon me, breaking of my bones, the tearing of my members, the grinding of my whole body, and the torments of the devils come upon me, so be it I may get Christ." *From Jeremiah Burroughs' "Moses his Self denial," 1649.*

**Verse 4.** *What flesh can do*, etc. It is according to the phrase of Scripture, when it would speak contemptibly of man and show him to be the lowest creature, to call him "flesh," to set forth the weakness that man is subject to. *John Arrowsmith, 1600-1660.*

**Verse 4.** (*last clause*). *Fear of man*—grim idol, bloody mouthed; many souls has he devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his eye. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit, dash this idol to pieces. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." "What have I to do any more with idols?" *Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.*

**Verse 4.** Faith groweth valiant in fight; albeit it began like a coward, and staggered in the first conflict, yet it groweth stout, incontinent, and pulls its adversaries under foot: *In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Every day they wrest my words*; or, they put my words to pain and grief, or, they painfully and grievously wrest my words. David's enemies took up what he spake, and put a new shape upon it; and this they did so vexingly, that they are said to *wrest* his words; a thing is vexed when it is wrested or wrought out of the form it before had. The same metaphor the apostle Peter useth in reference to doctrine, speaking of the Epistles of Paul, in which "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest*," or put upon the rack; they painfully form his words, and represent them in a meaning which he never intended. 2Pe 3:16. What is spoken may be right, both in the matter and intendment of the speaker, yet another wrests, forms and fashions it in his own mould, and makes it bear a sense which the speaker never dreamed of. *Joseph*

Caryl.

**Verse 5.** *Every day they wrest my words*, etc. Mr. Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, who, according to his life, died most godly and patiently, at the point of death used the versicle of the Hymn, "Te Deum, "O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded, " whereupon, suppressing the rest, they published that the principle champion of the heretics, in his very last words, cried he was confounded. *Lord Bacon's "Bible Thoughts."*

**Verse 5.** *They wrest my words.* Whatever Christ said in justification of himself was twisted to a meaning injurious to him. So it is still in the world, self justification by words answers but little purpose with ungodly men. *W. Wilson, D.D., 1860.*

**Verse 6.** *They mark my steps.* Go whither I will, they are at my heels. *William Nicholson(-1671), in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

**Verse 8.** *Put thou my tears in thy bottle.* Among other things in the collection of Mr. Abbott, of Cairo, he had a lachrymatory, or tear bottle, which had been found in a tomb at Thebes. This interested me very much. The custom in old times was, when a person was ill or in great distress, for his friends to go to see him, and take with them a tear bottle. Then, as the tears rolled down the cheeks of the sufferer, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial of the event. This is what David referred to in Ps 56:8. *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* But it implies much more than at first suggests itself, and much more than I can attempt to write. For instance, it is as if David had said, "Visit me, and behold my tears; " ("O visit me with thy salvation!") for without such *visit* there could be no bottling of his tears. "Thou tellest my wanderings; O visit me, and behold my anguish; put my tears into thy bottle, "for "they have been my meat day and night." Ps 42:3. "Keep them before thee, by way of remembrance, and when thou seest the bottle, O think of him whose tears it contains. Are they not in thy book?" That is, God's book of remembrance, that was written for those "who thought upon his name" (Mal 3:16), just as the kings of old used to keep a book of chronicles of important events. See Es 6:1-11. *John Gadsby, 1860.*

(We insert this to show what has been said by others; but we do not think there is the slightest allusion to this piece of *Roman* etiquette in this text. *C. H. S.*)

**Verse 8.** *My tear:* the singular used collectively. *In thy bottle:* as if one should say, take care of my tears, as of a kind of wine that is very costly, and very pleasant to thee; or, that hereafter you may measure out to me just that quantity of joys: a metaphor from the keeper of a vineyard, who receives into his vessel the drops of the grapes pressed out by the winepress of affliction. The word *dag* (*iter*) (leather or skin bottle) denotes the manner in which they preserved their wine. (1Sa 16:20; Jos 9:4,13), and milk also (Jud 4:19). *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 8.** *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* What a sweet thought is suggested here of God's remembrance of his people's affliction! It is an interesting figure of speech, of *bottling their tears.* But

the sense is, they are remembered. And woe will be to the man that offends one of God's little ones on his account. What are now bottles of tears, will be poured out in the end as so many vials of wrath. But reader! think how the tears of Jesus have been treasured up when shedding for the sins of his people. *Robert Hawker, 1753-1827.*

**Verse 8.** *Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* It is the witty observation of one, that God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle, a *bag* for our sins, and a *bottle* for our tears; and that we should help to fill this, as we have that. There is an allusion here in the original that cannot be Anglicized. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 8.** *Are they not in thy book?* While we remain in this vale of misery, God keeps all our tears in a bottle; so precious is the water that is distilled from penitent eyes; and because he will be sure not to fail, he notes how many drops there be in his register. It was a precious ointment wherewith the woman in the Pharisee's house (it is thought Mary Magdalene) anointed the feet of Christ; but her *tears*, wherewith she washed them, were more worth than her spikenard. *Abraham Wright, in "A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Book of Psalms, "1661.*

**Verse 9.** *When I cry.* The cry of faith and prayer to God is more dreadful to our spiritual foes than the war whoop of the Indian is to his surprised brother savages. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 9.** (*first clause*). It was somewhat that when David prayed he was saved from his enemies. "I will call on the Lord: so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (2Sa 22:4); there is the *defensive* power of prayer; but it is more that it puts enemies to the foil. *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back* and be put to flight; there is the *offensive* power of prayer. In David's tower there was an armoury, *thalpijoth*, a place to hang swords with two edges, swords with two mouths (Canticles 4:4); a defensive and an offensive edge. Both edges must be used by such as seek safety. Prayer is a sword with two edges. "Put up thy sword into his place," says Christ to Peter: "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Mt 22:52. But he that takes not this sword may happen to perish by the sword; and the drawing of this sword may save a man from perishing by the sword. Mark that last reason that our Saviour adds why Peter should put up his sword: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt 22:53). As if he had said, If it were my mind to confound these mine enemies that now set upon me, I should not need thy sword to do it. I could pray to my Father, and could presently by prayer bring such forces into the field as should rout and scatter all mine enemies; hereby implying, that if he would, he could do his enemies more damage and mischief by his prayers against them than by the sword and all instruments of war. Prayer is *twelve legions* strong, yea, twelve legions of angels strong against enemies. *Jeremiah Dyke (1620), in the Righteous Man's Tower.*

**Verse 9.** *This I know.* Faith goeth upon solid grounds, and is not a fallible conjecture, but a sure knowledge. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 10.** *In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word.* The first word, *Elohim*, is a name belonging to God as a judge, the second word, *Jehovah*, is a name of mercy. I will praise God whether he deal with me in a way of justice or in a way of mercy, when he hath thunder in his voice, as well as when he hath honey under his tongue. Oh, how should we praise God, and pleasure ourselves by such a frame! *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 10.** (*first clause*). By the assistance of God I shall be enabled to praise him for the performance of his promises. *Symon Patrick, 1626-1707.*

**Verse 12.** *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* Whoever is conversant with the Psalms of David, will find him frequently making *vows*, and careful in paying them. When these words dropped from him he was just delivered out of a pressing danger among the Philistines, with whom he took shelter from the rage of King Saul, who unweariedly pursued him; but he soon found that the remembrance of his past achievements to their damage was still so fresh amongst them, and they so exasperated thereupon, that his life was in constant danger. In his distress he flies to God, his wonted refuge, and sends up earnest addresses to him, *vowing* if he would open a way for his deliverance out of these new straits, he would show his grateful sense of so signal a mercy, by the exactness and accuracy of his future obedience. God hears and succours him; and he thereupon grateful looks back, endeavours to renew the sense of his former obligation to his great Deliverer, and to stir up himself by suitable returns, and so cries out, *Thy vows are upon me, O God;* as if he should say, I resolve, O Lord, not to forget what was transacted while I was under my fears. Thou hast heard my cries, and I own myself firmly bound by my *vows*. I was serious and in earnest when I made them, and I will endeavour to show that I was so by my care to perform them. *Thy vows, O God, made indeed on my part, but justly to be exacted on thine, are upon me, they do in reality hold me fast, and I desire not to be released. I am sensible I deserve to be stigmatised for a perfidious wretch if I ever forget them.* This temper of holy David with reference to the *vows* he made on this occasion, should be ours with reference to all the sacred *vows* we any way come under. All Christians, as such, are necessarily under *vows* to the blessed God: and particular circumstances may make it expedient for us to come under special engagements to him. But wherever they are such as that they may justly be denominated *vows of God, i.e.,* are such as his word will warrant; we should make holy David, as speaking in this text, our pattern, and set ourselves to imitate him, in seriously owning their binding force, and endeavouring to answer and pay them. *Edmund Calamy, in "A Practical Discourse Concerning Vows," 1704.*

**Verse 12.** *Thy vows are upon me, O God.* A well composed *vow* will make thee more circumspect and wary in the general course of thy life. Such an influence it hath, as doth more directly work on one particular part, yet is not terminated to that particular only. Thus it was with David. These *vows* were made when he was in danger of his life, as it seemeth from Ps 56:13; for when God heard him,

he delivered his soul from death: for this he vowed praises in particular, and he will render them. But, withal he takes himself to be hereby engaged to a more exact and circumspect walk before God in all duties: so he expresses himself in the latter part of Ps 56:13. *Henry Hurst (1629-1696), in "The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate," 1661.*

**Verses 12-13.** Thy vows are upon me, O God. Passively, vows made to God, not by God; or the obligations of those vows and prayers which I have made and upon which I have received answers. Sacrifices of thanksgiving were called vows, as having been vowed to God upon the want, and to be paid upon the receipt, of mercy. Le 1:1, "If the sacrifice that is offered be a vow." Thy vows are upon me; the fruit of my vows, so that I stand indebted to God for the return of praise. *Thou hast delivered.* He understands some great danger wherein he had sunk had not God stood by him, and from a greater mercy, the deliverance of his soul from death, argues for a less, the keeping his feet from falling. *That I may walk before God in the light of the living.* By light of the living is meant life, which is called being enlightened with the "light of the living." Job 33:30. Sometimes eternal life in heaven. Joh 8:12, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "To walk before God." To walk obediently in the sight of God; with a respect to his presence; a walking unto all well pleasing. This is the last argument in the Psalm whereon he builds his strongest plea, as if he knew not what to urge if this should fail him; as if he should have said, Lord, I have had experience of thy wisdom in contriving, thy power in effecting, thy mercy in bestowing deliverance upon me, thy goodness in answering my vows and prayers. "Thou hast delivered from death, "a danger as great and unavoidable as death itself. O Lord, art not thou the same as thou wert? Art not thou still as wise to design, and as gracious to confer further mercy? Wilt thou not as certainly also deliver my feet from falling? The one contains his experience, the other the inference or conclusion he draws from it. Mercies received are in a special manner to be remembered. Mercies received are encouragements to ask, and strong grounds to hope for the mercies we want. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verses 12-13.** Thy vows are upon me, O God. *See Psalms on "Ps 56:12" for further information.*

**Verse 13.** *From falling,* or, as more literally translated, from a *thrust,* or a *push,* by which one is caused to fall. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

**Verse 13 (last clause).** *To walk in the presence of God* is partly under his eyes, his guidance and care, partly in particular, where God is wont to be *present,* where he is *worshipped* by his people and scatters his blessings, opposed to his present state by which he was removed from the place of his worship and presence. Conf. 1Sa 26:19, etc. Lastly, *to walk in the light of the living* denotes in general to live amongst *those who live in the light,* or who enjoy the *light,* as it is said elsewhere, *in the land of the living*—Ps 27:13 Isa 38:11 53:8; Eze 32:32; Ps 142:6—opposed to the *dead* or *the region of the dead,* who dwell *in darkness.* But in particular it signifies to live in a *safe* and *prosperous* state, whose well known emblem is *light.* *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 13** (*last clause*). We cannot restrict this phrase to the light of mortal life; David's vows bound him to walk in the *light of spiritual life*, and also in the *light of eternal life*, of which by faith he was a partaker. And most commentators have applied this verse to the *light of glory* in the world to come, as the real and final object of the believer's conversation here on earth. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

##### **Verses 2-3.**

1. *Fears are common to all men*, at one time or another.
2. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to.
3. There is here suggested a *true and effectual* method of removing fear.

—*Robert Morrison (1782-1834), in "A Parting Memorial."*

**Verse 3.** *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* Whensoever we are afraid of any evil, we are still to put our trust in God.

1. What is it to put our trust in God?
  - (a) To keep our hearts from desponding or sinking down under any fears.
  - (b) To comfort ourselves in God.
  - (c) To expect deliverance from him.
2. What is there in God we ought to put our trust in?
  - (a) In his promises.
  - (b) In his properties. His power, wisdom, justice, mercy, all sufficiency.
3. Why should we in all our fears put our trust in God?
  - (a) Because there is none else can secure us from our fears. Whereas,
  - (b) There are no fears but God can secure us from them, either by removing the thing feared, or by subduing the fear of the thing. *Bishop Beveridge.*

##### **Verse 3.**

1. There is fear without trust.
2. There is trust without fear.
3. There is fear and trust united. *G. R.*

##### **Verse 7.**

1. From iniquity there is an escape.
2. By iniquity there is no escape. The mercy of God secures the one. The justice of God prevents the other. *G. R.*

**Verse 8.** Here are—

1. Manifold mercies, to reclaim from wanderings.
2. Tender mercies, putting tears in a bottle.

3. Covenant mercies, "Are they not, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 9.**

1. God is on the side of his people.
2. He is known to be on their side.
3. In answer to prayer he appears on their side.
4. When he appears enemies flee.

Or—

1. The fact, God is for me.
2. The knowledge of that fact—*This I know.*
3. The use of that knowledge—*When I cry, etc.*
4. The consequence of that use—*Mine enemies turn back. G. R.*

**Verse 10.**

1. "I will praise God *for* his word."
2. *In* his word, as he is there revealed.
3. *By* his word. "Thou hast put a song, "etc.

**Verse 12.** Here is—

1. Past dedication.
2. Present consecration.
3. Future glorification. *G. R.*

**Verses 12-13.** You have here—

1. The commemoration of former mercies: *Thou hast delivered.*
2. The confidence of future: *Wilt not thou.*
3. The end of all: *To walk before God in the light of the living. Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 13.**

1. The language of Gratitude—*Thou hast, etc.*
2. Of Faith—*Wilt not thou, etc.*
3. Of Hope—*That I may walk, etc. G. R.*

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**WORK UPON THE FIFTY-SIXTH PSALM**

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David, "Vol. 1., pp. 104-7, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.*

**Psalm 57**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

## Other Works

**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician.* So glad a song as this becomes ere it closes, should be in the keeping of the most skilled of all the temple minstrels. *Altaschith, i.e., DESTROY NOT.* This petition is a very sententious prayer, as full as it is brief, and well worthy to be the motto for a sacred song. David had said, "destroy not," in reference to Saul, when he had him in his power, and now he takes pleasure in employing the same words in supplication to God. We may infer from the spirit of the Lord's prayer, that the Lord will spare us as we spare our foes. There are four of these "*Destroy not*" Psalms, namely, the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 75th. In all of them there is a distinct declaration of the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous, and they all have probably a reference to the overthrow of the Jews, on account of their persecution of the great Son of David: they will endure heavy chastisement, but concerning them it is written in the divine decree, "Destroy them not." *Michtam of David.* For quality this Psalm is called golden, or a secret, and it well deserves the name. We may read the words and yet not know the secret joy of David, which he has locked up in his golden casket. *When he fled from Saul in the cave.* This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein.

**DIVISION.** We have here prayer, Ps 57:1-6, and praise, Ps 57:7-11. The hunted one takes a long breath of prayer, and when he is fully inspired, he breathes out his soul in jubilant song.

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* Urgent need suggests the repetition of the cry, for thus intense urgency of desire is expressed. If he gives twice who gives quickly, 'so he who would receive quickly must ask twice. For mercy the psalmist pleads at first, and he feels he cannot improve upon his plea, and therefore returns to it. God is the God of mercy, and the Father of mercies, it is most fit therefore that in distress he should seek mercy from him in whom it dwells. For my soul trusteth in thee. Faith urges her suit right well. How can the Lord be unmerciful to a trustful soul? Our faith does not deserve mercy, but it always wins it from the sovereign grace of God when it is sincere, as in this case where *the soul* of the man believed. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge. Not in the cave alone would he hide, but in the cleft of the Rock of ages. As the little birds find ample shelter beneath the parental wing, even so would the fugitive place himself beneath the secure protection of the divine power. The emblem is delightfully familiar and suggestive. May we all experimentally know its meaning. When we cannot see the sunshine of God's face, it is blessed to cower down beneath the shadow of his wings.

Until these calamities be overpast. Evil will pass away, and the eternal wings will abide over us till then. Blessed be God, our calamities are matters of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity. When we are under the divine shadow, the passing over of trouble cannot harm us; the hawk flies across the sky, but this is no evil to the chicks when they are safely nestling beneath the hen.

**Verse 2.** *I will cry.* He is quite safe, but yet he prays, for faith is never dumb. We pray because we believe. We exercise by faith the spirit of adoption whereby we cry. He says not I do cry, or I have cried, but I will cry, and indeed, this resolution may stand with all of us until we pass through the gates of pearl; for while we are here below we shall still have need to cry. Unto God most high.—Prayers are for God only; the greatness and sublimity of his person and character suggest and encourage prayer; however high our enemies, our heavenly Friend is higher, for he is *Most high*, and he can readily send from the height of his power the succour which we need. Unto God that performeth all things for me. He has cogent reason for praying, for he sees God performing. The believer waits and God works. The Lord has undertaken for us, and he will not draw back, he will go through with his covenant engagements. Our translators have very properly inserted the words, "all things," for there is a blank in the Hebrew, as if it were a *carte blanche*, and you might write therein that the Lord would finish anything and everything which he has begun. Whatsoever the Lord takes in hand he will accomplish; hence past mercies are guarantees for the future, and admirable reasons for continuing to cry unto him.

**Verse 3.** *He shall send from heaven.* If there be no fit instruments on earth, heaven shall yield up its legions of angels for the succour of the saints. We may in times of great straits expect mercies of a remarkable kind; like the Israelites in the wilderness, we shall have our bread hot from heaven, new every morning; and for the overthrow of our enemies God shall open his celestial batteries, and put them to utter confusion. Wherever the battle is more fierce than ordinary, there shall come succours from headquarters, for the Commander in chief sees all. And save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. He will be in time, not only to rescue his servants from being swallowed up, but even from being reproached. Not only shall they escape the flames, but not even the smell of fire shall pass upon them. O dog of hell, I am not only delivered from thy bite, but even from thy bark. Our foes shall not have the power to sneer at us, their cruel jests and taunting gibes shall be ended by the message from heaven, which shall for ever save us. Selah. Such mercy may well make us pause to meditate and give thanks. Rest, singer, for God has given thee rest! God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. He asked for mercy, and truth came with it. Thus evermore doth God give us more than we ask or think. His attributes, like angels on the wing, are ever ready to come to the rescue of his chosen.

**Verse 4.** *My soul is among lions.* He was a very Daniel. Howled at, hunted, wounded, but not slain. His place was in itself one of extreme peril, and yet faith made him feel himself secure, so that he

could lie down. The cave may have reminded him of a lion's den, and Saul and his band shouting and yelling in their disappointment at missing him, were the lions; yet beneath the divine shelter he finds himself safe. And I lie even among them that are set on fire. Perhaps Saul and his band kindled a fire in the cavern while they halted in it, and David was thus reminded of the fiercer fire of their hate which burned within their hearts. Like the bush in Horeb, the believer is often in the midst of flames, but never consumed. It is a mighty triumph of faith when we can lie down even among firebrands and find rest, because God is our defence. Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their *tongue a sharp sword*. Malicious men carry a whole armoury in their mouths; they have not harmless mouths, whose teeth grind their own food as in a mill, but their jaws are as mischievous as if every tooth were a javelin or an arrow. They have no molars, all their teeth are canines, and their nature is canine, leonine, wolfish, devilish. As for that busy member the tongue, in the case of the malicious, it is a two edged, keen, cutting, killing sword. The tongue, which is here compared to a sword, has the adjective *sharp* added to it, which is not used in reference to the teeth, which are compared to spears, as if to show that if men were actually to tear us with their teeth, like wild beasts, they could not thereby wound us so severely as they can do with their tongues. No weapon is so terrible as a tongue sharpened on the devil's grindstone; yet even this we need not fear, for "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

**Verse 5.** *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* This is the chorus of the Psalm. Before he has quite concluded his prayer the good man interjects a verse of praise; and glorious praise too, seeing it comes from the lion's den and from amid the coals of fire. Higher than the heavens is the Most High, and so high ought our praises to rise. Above even the power of cherubim and seraphim to express it, the glory of God is revealed and is to be acknowledged by us. Let thy glory be above all the earth. As above, so below, let thy praises, O thou great Jehovah, be universally proclaimed. As the air surrounds all nature, so let thy praises gird the earth with a zone of song.

**Verse 6.** *They have prepared a net for my steps.* The enemies of the godly spare no pains, but go about their wicked work with the coolest deliberation. As for each sort of fish, or bird, or beast, a fitting net is needed, so do the ungodly suit their net to their victim's circumstances and character with a careful craftiness of malice. Whatever David might do, and whichever way he might turn, his enemies were ready to entrap him in some way or other. My soul is bowed down. He was held down like a bird in a trap; his enemies took care to leave him no chance of comfort. They have dugged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are *fallen themselves*. He likens the design of his persecutors to pits, which were commonly dug by hunters to entrap their prey; these were made in the usual path of the victim, and in this case David says, *before me, i.e.,* in my ordinary way. He rejoices because these devices had recoiled upon themselves. Saul hunted David, but David caught him more than once and

might have slain him on the spot. Evil is a stream which one day flows back to its source. Selah. We may sit down at the pit's mouth and view with wonder the just retaliations of providence.

**Verse 7.** *My heart is fixed.* One would have thought he would have said, "My heart is fluttered;" but no, he is calm, firm, happy, resolute, established. When the central axle is secure, the whole wheel is right. If our great bower anchor holds, the ship cannot drive. O God, my heart is fixed. I am resolved to trust thee, to serve thee, and to praise thee. Twice does he declare this to the glory of God who thus comforts the souls of his servants. Reader, it is surely well with thee, if thy once roving heart is now firmly fixed upon God and the proclamation of his glory. I will sing and give praise. Vocally and instrumentally will I celebrate thy worship. With lip and with heart will I ascribe honour to thee. Satan shall not stop me, nor Saul, nor the Philistines, I will make Adullam ring with music, and all the caverns thereof echo with joyous song. Believer, make a firm decree that your soul in all seasons shall magnify the Lord.

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason  
Fain would stop the joyful song:  
Sing, and count it highest treason  
For a saint to hold his tongue."

**Verse 8.** *Awake up, my glory.* Let the noblest powers of my nature bestir themselves: the intellect which conceives thought, the tongue which expresses it, and the inspired imagination which beautifies it—let all be on the alert now that the hour for praise has come. Awake, psaltery and harp. Let all the music with which I am familiar be well attuned for the hallowed service of praise. I myself will awake early. I will awake the dawn with my joyous notes. No sleepy verses and weary notes shall be heard from me; I will thoroughly arouse myself for this high employ. When we are at our best we fall short of the Lord's deserts, let us, therefore, make sure that what we bring him is our best, and, if marred with infirmity, at least let it not be deteriorated by indolence. Three times the psalmist calls upon himself to awake. Do we need so much arousing, and for such work? Then let us not spare it, for the engagement is too honourable, too needful to be left undone or ill done for want of arousing ourselves.

**Verse 9.** *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* Gentiles shall hear my praise. Here is an instance of the way in which the truly devout evangelic spirit overleaps the boundaries which bigotry sets up. The ordinary Jew would never wish the Gentile dogs to hear Jehovah's name, except to tremble at it; but this grace taught psalmist has a missionary spirit, and would spread the praise and fame of his God. I will sing unto thee among the nations. However far off they may be, I would make them hear of thee through my glad psalmody.

**Verse 10.** *For thy mercy is great unto the heavens.* Right up from man's lowliness to heaven's loftiness mercy reaches. Imagination fails to guess the height of heaven, and even thus the riches of

mercy exceed our highest thoughts. The psalmist, as he sits at the cave's mouth and looks up to the firmament, rejoices that God's goodness is more vast and more sublime than even the vaulted skies. And thy truth unto the clouds. Upon the cloud he sets the seal of his truth, the rainbow, which ratifies his covenant; in the cloud he hides his rain and snow, which prove his truth by bringing to us seedtime and harvest, cold and heat. Creation is great, but the Creator greater far. Heaven cannot contain him; above clouds and stars his goodness far exceeds.

**Verse 11.** *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens.* A grand chorus. Take it up, ye angels and ye spirits made perfect, and join in it, ye sons of men below, as ye say, Let thy glory be above all the earth. The prophet in the previous verse spoke of mercy "unto the heavens," "but here his song flies "above the heavens; "praise rises higher, and knows no bound

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** This Psalm was composed, as the title notes, by David prayer wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the cave, and is inscribed with a double title, *Altaschith, Michtam of David*. *Altaschith* refers to the scope, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject matter. The former signifies *destroy not*, or, let there be no slaughter; and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetic ejaculation; *Altaschith*, destroy not. The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the Psalm, which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did. *John Flavel (1627-1692), in "Divine Conduct, or the Mystery of Providence."*

**Title.** A Psalm composed *when David fled from Saul in the cave*, which is referred to in Psalm 143, and which, because it is without any other distinction called "the cave," is probably that celebrated cave where David with his six hundred followers lay concealed when Saul entered and David cut off the skirt of his robe. The king, accompanied by three thousand followers, chased him to the loftiest alpine heights—"to the sheepcotes, "where the cattle were driven in the hottest summer months only—to hunt him in every hiding place. There was a cave, in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate thousands of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (Ps 57:2); in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (Ps 57:8). His life was really suspended by a hair, if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him! *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

**Title.** *The cave.* There appear good grounds for the local tradition which fixes the cave on the borders of the Dead Sea, although there is no certainty with regard to the particular cave pointed out. The cave so designated is at a point to which David was far more likely to summon his parents,

whom he intended to take from Bethlehem in to Moab, than to any place in the western plains... It is an immense natural cavern, the mouth of which can be approached only on foot along the side of the cliff. Irby and Mangles, who visited it without being aware that it was the reputed Cave of Adullam, state that it "runs in by a long, winding, narrow passage, with small chambers or cavities on either side. We soon came to a large chamber with natural arches of great height; from this last there were numerous passages, leading in all directions, occasionally joined by others at right angles, and forming a perfect labyrinth, which our guides assured us had never been perfectly explored—the people being afraid of losing themselves. The passages are generally four feet high by three feet wide, and were all on a level with each other." ...It seems probable that David as a native of Bethlehem, must have been well acquainted with this remarkable spot, and had probably often availed himself of its shelter, when out with his father's flocks. It would, therefore, naturally occur to him as a place of refuge when he fled from Gath. *John Kitto (1804-1854), in "A Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature."*

**Whole Psalm.** Mystically this hymn may be construed of Christ, who was in the days of his flesh assaulted by the tyranny both of spiritual and temporal enemies. His temporal enemies, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, furiously raged and took counsel together against him. The chief priests and princes were, saith Hierome, like *lions*, and the people like the *whelps of lions*, all of them in a readiness to devour his soul. The rulers *laid a net for his feet* in their captious interrogatories, asking (Mt 22:17), "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" and (Joh 8:5) whether the woman taken in the very act of adultery should be stoned to death or no. The people were *set on fire*, "when as they raged against him, and *their teeth and tongues were spears and swords* in crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." His spiritual enemies also sought *to swallow him up*; his *soul was among lions* all the days of his life, at the hour of his death especially. The devil in tempting and troubling him, had *laid a snare for his feet*; and death, in *digging a pit* for him, had thought *to devour* him. As David was in death, so Christ the Son of David was in the *grave*. *John Boys, 1571-1625.*

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me, O God*, etc. This excellent Psalm was composed by David when there was enough to discompose the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the supplicant. *Mercy! Mercy! Nothing but mercy*, and that exerting itself in any extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress are very considerable.

1. He pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. *My soul trusteth in thee*, etc. This his trust and dependence upon God, though it be not argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *act*; yet it is so in respect both of the nature of the *object*, a compassionate God who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings, and in respect of the *promise*, whereby protection is assured to

them that fly to him for sanctuary. Isa 26:3.

2. He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait (Ps 57:2). *John Flavel*.

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me.* According to the weight of the burden that grieveth us, is the cry that comes from us. How do poor condemned prisoners cry to their judges, "Have pity upon us, have pity upon us!" David, in the day of his calamities doubles his prayer for mercy: *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee, etc., Until these calamities be overpast.* It was not a single calamity, but a multitude of calamities which compassed David, and therefore he compasseth the Lord about with petitions. His spirit being up in prayer, like a bell that rings out, he strikes on both sides, *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 1.** *Be merciful unto me.* The first clause contains the prayer itself in a very forcible word *gnx*, properly, "Show thy most tender affection to me, "such as animals, with a humming sound, show to their young. *Hermann Venema*.

**Verse 1.** *For my soul trusteth in thee.* The best reason with God, who "taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy." Ps 147:11. *Poole's Synopsis*.

**Verse 1.** *Soul.* His *soul* trusted in God; and this is a form of expression the force of which is not to be overlooked; for it implies that the trust which he exercised proceeded from his very innermost affection—that it was of no volatile character, but deeply and strongly rooted. He declares the same truth in figurative terms, when he adds his persuasion that God would cover him with the shadow of his wings. *John Calvin*.

**Verse 1.** *In the shadow of thy wings I will trust;* properly, I will seek for protection. The very delightful figure here employed, is taken from the chicken lying safely hid under the mother's wings; at the same time it seems to have reference to the wings of the cherubim, by which the mercyseat was covered. *Simon de Muis, 1587-1644*.

**Verse 1.** *The shadow of thy wings.* Compare Ps 17:8 61:4; and Mt 23:37; and the Apocalyptic imagery, describing the church fleeing from the dragon in the wilderness; and "to her are given the two wings of the great eagle, "and she is delivered from the dragon, who desires to *swallow her up*. See Re 12:6,15-16. *Christopher Wordsworth, 1868*.

**Verse 1.** *Until these calamities be overpast.* He compares his afflictions and calamity to a storm that cometh and goeth; as it is not always fair weather with us in this life, so not always foul. Athanasius said of Julian furiously raging against the Lord's Anointed, "*Nubecula est, cito transibit*, "he is a little cloud; he will soon pass away. Man is born to labour and dolour, to travail and trouble; to labour in his actions, to dolour in his passions; and so, "Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all." If we put our trust in him and cast all our care upon him, he will in his good time bring it to pass, that all our afflictions shall overpass. He will either take them from us or us from

them, and then we shall assuredly know that the troubles of this life present are not worthy of the glory which in the life to come shall be showed unto us. For as the globe of the earth, which improperly for his show of bigness we term the world, and is, after the mathematician's account, many thousand miles in compass; yet, being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a centre or little prick: so the travail and affliction of this life temporal, in respect of the joys eternal in the world to come, bear not any proportion, but are to be reputed in comparison a very nothing, as a dark cloud that cometh and goeth in a moment. *John Boys.*

**Verses 1-3.** In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these calamities be overpast*, etc. As if he had said, Lord, I am already in the cave and in the holds, and in the shadow of it, but yet for all that I think not myself safe indeed, till I have made my refuge in the shadow of thy wings: that is therefore the course I resolve and build upon. It was wisely done of him: and mark what course he takes to do it, Ps 57:2, *I will cry unto God most high*, I will by prayer put myself under the shadow of God's wings: and mark what success should follow, Ps 57:3, *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.* When we send prayers up to heaven, God will send help down from heaven. But yet David *prays* to God, as well as *trusts* in God. And unless we pray as well as trust, our trust will fail us, for we must trust to God for that we pray for. *Jeremiah Dyke, 1620.*

**Verse 3.** *Him that would swallow me up.* If I were to take you to my house, and say that I had an exquisite fat man, and wished you to join me in eating him, your indignation could be restrained by nothing. You would pronounce me to be crazy. There is not in New York a man so mean that he would not put down a man who should propose to have a banquet off from a fellow man, cutting steaks out of him, and eating them. And that is nothing but feasting on the human body, while they will all sit down, and take a man's soul, and look for the tender loins, and invite their neighbours in to partake of the little titbits. They will take a man's honour and name, and broil them over the coals of their indignation, and fill the whole room with the aroma thereof, and give their neighbour a piece, and watch him, and wink as he tastes it. You all eat men up... You eat the souls, the finest elements of men. You are more than glad if you can whisper a word that is derogatory to a neighbour, or his wife, or his daughter... The morsel is too exquisite to be lost. Here is the soul of a person, here is a person's hope for this world and the world to come, and you have it on your fork, and you cannot refrain from tasting it, and give it to some one else to taste. You are cannibals, eating men's honour and name and rejoicing in it—and that, too, when you do not always know that the things charged against them are true; when in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the probabilities are that they are not true. *Henry Ward Beecher, 1870.*

**Verse 3.** *God shall send forth his mercy and his truth*, viz., to save me. That is to say, God, to manifest his mercy, and vindicate the truth of his promises, will save me. The reader will observe,

that mercy and truth are here poetically represented as ministers of God, standing in his presence, ready to execute his pleasure, and employed by him in the salvation of his people. *Samuel Chandler.*

**Verse 3.** *His mercy and his truth.* He need not send down angels, he need send but *mercy and truth* down, which elsewhere it is said he prepares in the heavens. Ps 61:7. He prepares commissions for them, and sends them down with them for execution. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 4.** *My soul is among lions.* This may also be construed of the church, and that both in respect of her spiritual enemies and temporal. As for her ghostly foes, the devil is *a roaring lion* (1Pe 5:8), and our sins are the *whelps of lions*, ready to devour us. And concerning outward enemies, the church in this world is like Daniel in the lion's den, or as "the sucking child playing upon the hole of the asp." Isa 11:8. She hath here no visible power or outward help to fly to for succour, all her trust is in the Lord, and "under the shadow of his wings is her refuge, till this evil is overpast."... And surely, beloved, if the church had not any other enemies, but only these monstrous Antichrists of Rome, yet she might truly complain with our prophet here, *My soul is among lions*. Eleven popes had that name, whereof all, excepting two or three, were roaring lions in their Bulls, and ravening lions in seeking after their prey. *Leo* the tenth so pilled (Pill—peel, to pillage, plunder, strip) and polled (Poll, used synonymously with peel) the goodly nations of Germany with his unpardonable pardons and merciless indulgences, as that his insupportable cruelty gave the first occasion of the Reformation of religion in that country. *John Boys.*

**Verse 4.** (*first clause*). Mudge translates literally, *I lie with my soul amidst lionesses*. This agrees with the opinion of Bochart, who thinks that the animals here intended are lionesses, properly, when giving suck to their young, a time when they are peculiarly fierce and dangerous, "nor need we wonder," he observes, "that the lioness is reckoned among the fiercest lions; for the lioness equals, or even exceeds, the lion in strength and fierceness; "and this he proves from the testimonies of ancient writers. *James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc*, 1846.

**Verse 4.** *And I lie even among them that are set on fire.* The whole pith lies in the word *hbkva*, *I will recline*, which denotes a tranquil and secure condition of body and mind, like a man *reclining* and sleeping, as Ps 3:5; *I laid me down and slept, I awaked*; and lived composedly; Ps 4:9; *I will both lay me down in peace*, etc. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 4.** The horrors of a lion's den, the burning of a fiery furnace, and the cruel onset of war, are the striking images by which David here describes the peril and wretchedness of his present condition. *John Morison.*

**Verse 6.** *Net.* Not having fire arms, the ancients were much more skilful than the moderns in the use of snares, nets, and pits for capturing wild animals. A large class of Biblical figures and allusions necessarily presuppose this state of things. *W. M. Thomson.*

**Verse 7.** *My heart is fixed, O God*, etc. The psalmist knowing that it is the order and work of God, first

to prepare the heart for communion, and then to incline his own ear to hear his people, and to entertain communion with them in ordinances, he doth observe this order, and follow it with a practice suitable to it in his daily address to God, that is thus, wheresoever he doth find his heart put into a fitted and prepared frame for communion with God, he doth not let it die again, and go out of frame by a slothful neglect of such a disposition of heart. No, but he immediately sets himself to duty, to worship God, and to the acts of his worship, in his ordinances, as he expresses himself in Ps 57:7; viz., thus—ybl nwkg myhla ybl nwkg, *Nachon libbi Elohim, nachon libbi* (there is the first; he finds his heart fitted and prepared for communion with God): "My heart, "saith he, "is fitted or prepared" (for the word nwkg *nachon* is the passive conjugation *niphal*, signifying, he is fitted or prepared, from the root nzb, *chun*, he fitted or prepared, in the active; and so it is rather to be rendered prepared or fitted, then "fixed, "thus ykl, *libbi*, my heart; nwkg, *nachon*, is fitted or prepared), "O God, my heart is fitted or prepared" for communion with thee. Well, what follows? He presently sets himself upon that great duty and ordinance of communion with God, in the praising of his name and singing forth those praises, as in the words immediately following in the same verse, thus: *My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared*; therefore, hrmzaw, *ashidah va-azamerah*, "I will sing and give praise." *William Strong, in "Communion with God," 1656.*

**Verse 7.** *My heart is fixed, O God*, etc. Fitness for duty lies in the orderly temper of body and mind, making a man willing to undertake, and able to finish his work with comfortable satisfaction. If either the body or mind be distempered, a man is unfit for such an undertaking; both must be in a suitable frame, like a well tuned instrument, else there will be no melody: hence when David prepared himself for praises and worship, he tells us *his heart was ready and fixed*, and then, his *tongue was ready* also (Ps 45:1), so was his hand with psaltery and harp; all these were awakened into a suitable posture. That a man is or hath been in a fit order for service may be concluded from

1. His alacrity to undertake a duty.
2. His activity in the prosecution.
3. His satisfaction afterward. Right grounds and principles in these things being still presupposed.

*Richard Gilpin (1625-1699, 1700), in "Daemonologia Sacra."*

**Verse 7.** *I will sing.* It should alarm the wicked that they are contending with a people who sing and shout on the battle field. Yea, they never sing louder than when most distressed and afflicted. Whether saints conquer or are conquered they still sing on. Blessed be God for that. Let sinners tremble at contending with men of a spirit so heavenly. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 7.** Sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper. David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier: his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did. *William Gurnall.*

**Verses 7-8.** That worship that is performed with a sleepy, drowsy body, is a weak worship, but the

psalmist here makes the awakening of the body to be the fruit and effect of the preparation of the heart; *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* Why so? My heart is prepared. The heart prepared and thereby awaked, will awake the body. To worship God therefore without a prepared heart, is to worship him with a drowsy body, because with a drowsy heart, and therefore weakly. *John Angier, in "An Help to Better Hearts, for Better Times," 1647.*

**Verse 8.** *Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* We must prevent God by early praise as well as prayer: "The God of my mercy shall prevent me," sings David; and every child of David must prevent God again with his songs. Jehoshaphat delighted God with instruments of music before his deliverance. Faith must tune an *epinikion*, a psalm of victory, before the triumph. Praise is the ingenious mother of future mercies; as the Virgin Mary sang at Hebron before the birth of her son at Bethlehem. Oh, heavenly contention between mercy and duty! *Samuel Lee, 1625-1691.*

**Verse 8.** *Awake up, my glory, etc.* We must sing *with excited grace*. Not only with grace habitual, but with excited and actual: the musical instrument delights not but when it is played upon. In this duty we must follow Paul's advice to Timothy (2Ti 1:6), *anazwpurein*, stir up the grace that is in us, and cry out as David, *Awake love, awake delight.* Ps 57:8. The clock must be wound up before it can guide our time; the bird pleaseth not in her nest, but in her notes; the chimes only make music when they are going. Let us therefore beg the Spirit to blow upon our garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, when we set upon this joyous service. God loves active grace in duty, that the soul should be ready trimmed when it presents itself to Christ in any worship. *John Wells, in "Morning Exercises," 1674.*

**Verse 8.** *I will awake early.* Literally, 'I will awake the dawn.' a bold figure of poetry, as if the writer had said,—The morning shall not awake me to praise; but in my songs I will anticipate the dawn. *R. T. Society's Notes.*

**Verse 8.** It will answer our purpose to take notice, first, of the *terms* David uses, and then, secondly, press the *exhortation*. Of the terms he uses:

1. *My glory.* That is my *soul* (say some) because the spirit of a man is the glory of a man, whereby he is dignified and raised so much above the *brutes*, as to be but a "little lower than the angels," nay, to be akin to God himself, "the Father of spirits." My *musical skill*, say others, the glory of the artist above the unskilful; and that wherein David had the glory of excelling, as Jubal had of the first invention. My *tongue*, say others; for this is also the glory of a man above the dumb creatures, and the glory of a wise man above a fool. And as the tongue is the glory of a man, so the glory of the tongue is to glorify God. Praise is the glory of all other uses to which the tongue is employed; and the tongue is, in the body, that "temple of the Holy Ghost," what the silver trumpet was in the temple of Solomon; to sound the high praises of God, and express the raised affections of our souls.

2. *Awake, psaltery and harp.* The one for a psalm, the other for a spiritual song or hymn; that is to

say, all my musical instruments and skill I will employ in and consecrate to the glory of him who "puts new songs into my mouth." He first teaches my fingers to fight, and then to play the *epinikion*, or song of triumph. Sound, then, my psaltery and harp, emulous of those that are around the throne above; your melody can soften my cares, lay my fears, and turn my *cave* into a *choir*. As to these instruments in the worship of God, they were doubtless allowed to David, and to the church in his time. They were agreeable to the state of that church and people, who were led very much by their senses; and whose infant and less discerning condition made it needful for the natural man to have something to fasten upon and be entertained with in the worship of God and to sweeten and take off from the labour and burden of that service. But as the gospel worship and appointments are a more spiritual, pleasant, and reasonable service, and need them less, so in the gospel institution we find no footsteps of them; and we know who first brought them into the church, as well as who first brought them into the world. It is not my business here to dispute this matter; and he must at any time do it but indifferently, whose inclination is against him all the while, and whose genius tempts him to wish himself solidly confuted in all he can advance. But since I find these instruments in my text, and since the sound of such texts as these is made use of to turn the public worship so frequently into concerts of music, I shall leave them with this remark: that to let them alone, especially in public worship, though one thought them tolerable, has a much better grace with it than to declare them "sorely displeasing to God, and that they filthily defile his holy house and place of prayer."

3. *I myself will awake early.* And without this, all the rest have been an empty sound; there would have been no melody to the Lord, whatsoever good music he might have made to himself. He would not put God off with a sacrifice of mere air. He summons the attendance of all his powers. Himself is the offering; and his music plays to the sacrifice, as it goes up in holy affections and spiritual joys; and unless these accompany the song, the mere breath of an organ, or the trembling of the strings of an harp is as good devotion and less offensive to God. Consider the *nature and excellency of the duty*. Singing psalms is a compound of several other duties. It contains prayer to a very great advantage: the stretch of the voice does humour and lead on the earnest reaching of the mind after the desired blessing. It is the very element and breath of praise; and the apostle tells us that "teaching and admonishing one another" is performed in singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." For when we sing of *judgment*, it is awakening to sinners; and when we sing of *mercy*, it is comforting to all. Meditation cannot have a better help. The solemn movement of the time gives room for the mind to compass the full sense of the matter, and to impress it deep; and while the tongue is making the *pause*, the heart may make the *elevation*. In short, it gives an accent to all duty; it is the music of all other ordinances; it is adapted and suited to all circumstances; as appears from the psalms composed upon all occasions and subjects, doctrinal, prophetic, oratory, and historical; of praise and prayer, of grief and joy, in the penitential and complaining, in the triumphal and rejoicing; as if

singing of psalms could stand for everything, and, like the manna in the wilderness, gives a taste of all the other food we enjoy in the house of God.

Benjamin Grosvenor, D.D. (1675-1758), in "An Exhortation to the *Duty of Singing*, " *Eastcheap Lectures*, 1810.

**Verse 8.** The *psaltery* was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. The *harp* or lyre was a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. It appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 9.** *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people.* The Spirit of God who indited this scripture, made his penman know that the Gentiles should have the use of his Psalms. *David Dickson*.

**Verse 9.** *The people—the nations.* The Hebrew church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society, but it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim, *I will sing unto thee among the nations*. In the same spirit, a later psalmist summons the church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord's mighty acts: *O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people*. Ps 105:1. The full import of this class of texts is often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples*; everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms, in particular, the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction, the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious Psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of inspired Psalmody, did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world embracing hopes. *William Binnie, D.D., in "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use," 1870.*

**Verses 10-11.** A hard and ungrateful heart beholds even in prosperity only isolated drops of divine grace; but a grateful one like David's, though chased by persecutors, and striking the harp in the gloom of a cave, looks upon the mercy and faithfulness of God as a mighty ocean, waving and heaving from the earth to the clouds, and from the clouds to the earth again. *Agustus F. Tholuck*.

**Verse 11.** *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens*, etc. Greater words of prayer than these never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have as they imply, a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both. *Franz Delitzsch, 1869.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** (*first clause*). *Repetition in prayer.*

1. Its dangers. May degenerate into "vain repetitions." Carried to excess painfully suggests the idea, God is unwilling.
2. Its uses. Eases the soul like tears. Manifests intense emotion. Enables those of less mental activity to join in the general supplication. *R. A. Griffin.*

**Verse 1.** Here are—

1. Calamities:

- (a) War.
- (b) Pestilence.
- (c) Privations.
- (d) Sin, greatest of all.
- (e) Death.
- (f) Curse of a broken law.

2. Here is a refuge from these calamities.

- (a) In God.
- (b) Specially in the mercy of God.

3. There is flying to that refuge.

- (a) By faith; *My soul trusteth in thee; Under the shadow, etc.*
- (b) By prayer; "*Be*" etc.

4. Here is continuance both in faith and prayer; *until, etc. G. R.*

**Verses 1, 4, 6-7.** Note the varying condition of the same heart, at the same time. *My soul trusteth in thee... My soul is among lions... My soul is bowed down... My heart is fixed.*

**Verse 2.** Prayer to the performing God. He performs all his promises, all my salvation, all my preservation, all needed between here and heaven. Here he reveals his omnipotence, his grace, his faithfulness, his immutability; and we are bound to show our faith, patience, joy, and gratitude.

**Verse 2.** Strange reasons.

1. The psalmist in the depth of distress, cries to God, because he is most high in glory. Surely this thought might well paralyse him with the fear of divine inaccessibility, but the soul quickened with suffering, sees through and beyond the metaphor, rejoices in the truth, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly."

2. He cries to God for help, because God *is* performing all things for him. Why urge him then? Prayer is the music to which "the mighty man of war" goes forth to battle. *R. A. G.*

**Verse 3.** The saints comfort in adversity.

1. All contingencies are provided for: *He shall* (or will) *send*.
2. The highest resources are available: *from* heaven.
3. The worst foes will be overcome in the end: *him* that would swallow me up.
4. By the holiest means: *mercy and truth*. *R. A. G.*

**Verse 3.** The celestial messengers. What they are. The certainty of their being sent. Their efficient operation. The grateful receiver.

**Verse 3.** (*last clause*). The harmony of the divine attributes in salvation. Mercy founded on truth, truth vindicating mercy. Mercy without injustice, justice honoured in mercy.

**Verse 5.**

1. The end which God has in view, both in heaven and earth, in a sinful and in sinless worlds—his own glory.
2. Our duty to acquiesce in that end: *Be thou*, etc.—Not self, not men, not angels—*Be thou* exalted, etc. In this we should acquiesce—
  - (a) Actively, by seeking that end.
  - (b) Passively, by submission to his will. *G. R.*

**Verse 7.** (*first clause*). It is implied that the *heart* is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be *fixed*; *fixed for* the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; *fixed in* the duty by a close application; *attending on the Lord* without distraction. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 7.**

1. What is fixed? the heart, not the mind merely, but the will, the conscience, the affections, which draw the mind after them: *My heart is fixed*—found an anchorage, a resting place, not therefore at the mercy of every gale, etc.
2. The objects upon which it is fixed.
  - (a) Upon God.
  - (b) Upon his word.
  - (c) Upon his salvation.
  - (d) Upon heaven.
3. The fixedness of the heart upon these objects, denotes—
  - (a) Singleness of aim.
  - (b) Uniformity of action.
  - (c) Perseverance to the end. *G. R.*

**Verses 7-9.**

1. He that will be thankful must treasure up in his heart and memory the courtesy that is done him; so had David done, and therefore he mentions *his heart*; and to make it more emphatic, he names it

again, *My heart*.

2. After he remembers it, he must be affected with it, and resolve upon it; so doth David: *My heart is ready*, or else, *My heart is fixed*; confirmed I am in it to be thankful, and I cannot be altered.

3. It is not enough that a man carry about with him a thankful heart he must *anunciare*, tell it abroad, and make it known publicly what God hath done for him; yea, and do it joyfully too: *I will*, saith David, *sing and give praise*.

4. He must use all means he can to make it known—"tongue, ""psaltery, "and "harp, "all are little enough. Whence, by an apostrophe, David turns to these. *Awake, my glory: i.e., Tongue, awake; lute and harp, awake; I myself will awake*.

5. He must not do it in a sleepy manner, but with intention and earnestness of spirit: *"Awake, awake, I will awake."*

6. He must take the first opportunity to do it, and not hang off and delay it. *I will awake early*.

7. He must do it in such a place, and such an assembly as may most redound to God's honour: *I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. William Nicholson*.

**Verse 9.** Who? *I*. What? *Will praise*. Whom? *Thee, O Lord*. Where? *Among the people*. Why?

**Verse 9.** Public profession.

1. A necessity.

2. A privilege.

3. A duty. *R. A. G.*

**Verse 10.** The mercy of God reaches to the heavens.

1. As a throne. God is exalted in our eyes by his mercy.

2. As a ladder. By mercy we ascend from earth to heaven.

3. As a rainbow. Present and past mercies argue exemption for the saints from the wrath of heaven.

4. As a mountain. Its base is on the earth though its summit is lost in clouds. The influence of the cross towers to the heaven of heavens. Who can tell the glory of the summit of this mountain, whose base is refulgent with glory! *R. A. G.*

**Verse 10.** The amazing greatness of mercy.

1. It is not said merely that it is high as heaven, but great unto the heavens. It is *high* as the heavens, overtopping the greatest sin, and highest thought of man.

2. It is *wide* as the far reaching sky, compassing men of all ages, countries, classes, etc.

3. It is *deep*. Everything of God is proportionate; this, therefore, is deep in abiding foundation, and infinite wisdom.

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#### WORKS UPON THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PSALM

The Works of JOHN BOYS, D.D., "Deane of Canterburie, "1629, folio, pp. 834-40, contains an

Exposition of Psalm 57.

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David, "Vol. 1., pp. 176-9, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.*

## **Psalm 58**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

To the Chief Musician. Although David had his own case in his mind's eye, yet he wrote not as a private person, but as an inspired prophet, and therefore his song is presented, for public and perpetual use, to the appointed guardian of the Temple psalmody. *Altaschith*. The wicked are here judged and condemned, but over the godly the sacred "*Destroy not*" is solemnly pronounced. *Michtam of David*. This is the fourth of the Psalms of the Golden Secret, and the second of the "Destroy not." These names if they serve for nothing else may be useful to aid the memory. Men give names to their horses, jewels, and other valuables, and these names are meant not so much to describe as to distinguish them, and in some cases to set forth the owner's high esteem of his treasure; after the same fashion the Oriental poet gave a title to the song he loved, and so aided his memory, and expressed his estimation of the strain. We are not always to look for a meaning in these superscriptions, but to treat them as we would the titles of poems, or the names of tunes.

**DIVISION.** The ungodly enemy is accused, Ps 58:1-5; judgment is sought from the judge, Ps 58:6-8; and seen in prophetic vision as already executed, Ps 58:9-11.

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?* The enemies of David were a numerous and united band, and because they so unanimously condemned the persecuted one, they were apt to take it for granted that their verdict was a right one. "What everybody says must be true," is a lying proverb based upon the presumption which comes of large combinations. Have we not all agreed to hound the man to the death, and who dare hint that so many great ones can be mistaken? Yet the persecuted one lays the axe at the root by requiring his judges to answer the question whether or not they were acting according to justice. It were well if men would sometimes pause, and candidly consider this. Some of those who surrounded Saul were rather passive than active persecutors; they held their tongues when the object of royal hate was slandered; in the original, this first sentence appears to be addressed to them, and they are asked to justify their silence. Silence gives consent. He who refrains from defending the right is himself an accomplice in the wrong. Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? Ye too are only men though dressed in a little brief authority. Your

office for men, and your relation to men both bind you to rectitude; but have ye remembered this? Have ye not put aside all truth when ye have condemned the godly, and united in seeking the overthrow of the innocent? Yet in doing this be not too sure of success, or ye are only the "sons of men," and there is a God who can and will reverse your verdicts.

**Verse 2.** *Yea, in heart ye work wickedness.* Down deep in your very souls ye hold a rehearsal of the injustice ye intend to practise, and when your opportunity arrives, ye wreak vengeance with a gusto; your hearts are in your wicked work, and your hands are therefore ready enough. Those very men who sat as judges, and pretended to so much indignation at the faults imputed to their victim, were in their hearts perpetrating all manner of evil. Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. They were deliberate sinners, cold, calculating villains. As righteous judges ponder the law, balance the evidence, and weigh the case, so the malicious dispense injustice with malice aforethought in cold blood. Note in this verse that the men described sinned with heart and hand; privately in their heart, publicly in the earth; they worked and they weighed—they were active, and yet deliberate. See what a generation saints have to deal with! Such were the foes of our Lord, a generation of vipers, an evil and adulterous generation; they sought to kill him because he was righteousness itself, yet they masked their hatred to his goodness by charging him with sin.

**Verse 3.** *The wicked are estranged from the womb.* It is small wonder that some men persecute the righteous seed of the woman, since all of them are of the serpent's brood, and enmity is set between them. No sooner born than alienated from God—what a condition to be found in! Do we so early leave the right track? Do we at the same moment begin to be men and commence to be sinners? They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Every observer may see how very soon infants act lies. Before they can speak they practise little deceptive arts. This is especially the case in those who grow up to be adept in slander, they begin their evil trade early, and there is no marvel that they become adept in it. He who starts early in the morning will go far before night. To be untruthful is one of the surest proofs of a fallen state, and since falsehood is universal, so also is human depravity.

**Verse 4.** *Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.* Is man also a poisonous reptile? Yes, and his venom is even as that of a serpent. The viper has but death for the body in his fangs; but unregenerate man carries poison under his tongue, destructive to the nobler nature. They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. While speaking of serpents the psalmist remembers that many of them have been conquered by the charmer's art, but men such as he had to deal with no art could tame or restrain; therefore, he likens them to a serpent less susceptible than others to the charmer's music, and says that they refused to hear reason, even as the adder shuts her ear to those incantations which fascinate other reptiles. Man, in his natural corruption, appears to have all the ill points of a serpent without its excellences. O sin, what hast thou done!

**Verse 5.** *Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.* Ungodly men are not to be won to right by arguments the most logical, or appeals the most pathetic. Try all your arts, ye preachers of the word! Lay yourselves out to meet the prejudices and tastes of sinners, and ye shall yet have to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" It is not in your music, but in the sinner's ear that the cause of failure lies, and it is only the power of God that can remove it.

"You can call spirits from the vast deep,

But will they come when you do call for them?"

No, we call and call, and call in vain, till the arm of the Lord is revealed. This is at once the sinner's guilt and danger. He ought to hear but will not, and because he will not hear, he cannot escape the damnation of hell.

**Verse 6.** *Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth.* If they have no capacity for good, at least deprive them of their ability for evil. Treat them as the snake charmers do their serpents, extract their fangs, break their teeth. The Lord can do this, and he will. He will not suffer the malice of the wicked to triumph, he will deal them such a blow as shall disable them from mischief. Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. As if one brute creature had not enough of evil in it to complete the emblem of ungodly nature, another specimen of *ferae naturae* is fetched in. For fierce cruelty the wicked are likened to young lions, monsters in the prime of their vigour, and the fury of their lustiness; and it is asked that their grinders may be smashed in, broken off, or dashed out, that the creatures may henceforth be harmless. One can well understand how the banished son of Jesse, while poisoned by the venomous slander of his foes, and worried by their cruel power, should appeal to heaven for a speedy and complete riddance from his enemies.

**Verse 7.** *Let them melt away as waters which run continually.* Like mountain torrents dried up by the summer heats let them disappear; or like running streams whose waters are swiftly gone, so let them pass away; or like water spilt which none can find again, so let them vanish out of existence. Begone, ye foul streams, the sooner ye are forgotten the better for the universe. When he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in *pieces*. When the Lord goes forth to war, let his judgments so tell upon these persecutors that they may be utterly cut in pieces as a mark shattered by many shafts. Or perhaps the meaning is, when the ungodly man marches to the conflict, let his arrows and his bow drop into fragments, the string cut, the bow snapped, the arrows headless, the points blunted; so that the boastful warrior may not have wherewithal to hurt the object of his enmity. In either sense the prayer of the Psalm has often become fact, and will be again fulfilled as often as need arises.

**Verse 8.** *As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away.* As the snail makes its own way by its slime, and so dissolves as it goes, or as its shell is often found empty, as though the inhabitant had melted away, so shall the malicious eat out their own strength while they proceed upon their malevolent designs, and shall themselves disappear. To destroy himself by envy and chagrin is the

portion of the ill disposed. Like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the *sun*. Solemn is this curse, but how surely does it fall on many graceless wretches! They are as if they had never been. Their character is shapeless, hideous, revolting. They are fitter to be hidden away in an unknown grave than to be reckoned among men. Their life comes never to ripeness, their aims are abortive, their only achievement is to have brought misery to others, and horror to themselves. Such men as Herod, Judas, Alva, Bonner, had it not been better for them if they had never been born? Better for the mothers who bore them? Better for the lands they cursed? Better for the earth in which their putrid carcasses are hidden from the sun? Every unregenerate man is an abortion. He misses the true form of God made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven.

**Verse 9.** *Before your pots can feel the thorns.* So sudden is the overthrow of the wicked, so great a failure is their life, that they never see joy. Their pot is put upon the hook to prepare a feast of joy, and the fuel is placed beneath, but before the thorns are lit, before any heat can be brought to bear upon the pot, yea, even as soon as the fuel has touched the cooking vessel, a storm comes and sweeps all away; the pot is overturned, the fuel is scattered far and wide. Perhaps the figure may suppose the thorns, which are the fuel, to be kindled, and then the flame is so rapid that before any heat can be produced the fire is out, the meat remains raw, the man is disappointed, his work is altogether a failure. He shall take them away as with a whirlwind. Cook, fire, pot, meat and all, disappear at once, whirled away to destruction. Both living, and in his wrath. In the very midst of the man's life, and in the fury of his rage against the righteous, the persecutor is overwhelmed with a tornado, his designs are baffled, his contrivances defeated, and himself destroyed. The passage is difficult, but this is probably its meaning, and a very terrible one it is. The malicious wretch puts on his great seething pot, he gathers his fuel, he means to play the cannibal with the godly; but he reckons without his host, or rather without the Lord of hosts, and the unexpected tempest removes all trace of him, and his fire, and his feast, and that in a moment.

**Verse 10.** *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* He will have no hand in meting out, neither will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgments of God, and he shall rejoice to see justice triumphant. There is nothing in Scripture of that sympathy with God's enemies which modern traitors are so fond of parading as the finest species of benevolence. We shall at the last say, "Amen, "to the condemnation of the wicked, and feel no disposition to question the ways of God with the impenitent. Remember how John, the loving disciple, puts it. "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke

rose up for ever and ever." He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. He shall triumph over them, they shall be so utterly vanquished that their overthrow shall be final and fatal, and his deliverance complete and crowning. The damnation of sinners shall not mar the happiness of saints.

**Verse 11.** *So that a man shall say.* Every man however ignorant shall be compelled to say, Verily, in very deed, assuredly, there is a reward for the righteous. If nothing else be true this is. The godly are not after all forsaken and given over to their enemies; the wicked are not to have the best of it, truth and goodness are recompensed in the long run. Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. All men shall be forced by the sight of the final judgment to see that there is a God, and that he is the righteous ruler of the universe. Two things will come out clearly after all—there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile faith's foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad thereat.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**TITLE.** The proper meaning of the root of *Michtam* is *to engrave*, or *to stamp a metal*. It therefore, in strictness, means, *an engraving* or *sculpture*. Hence in the Septuagint, it is translated *sthlografia*, an inscription on a column. I would venture to offer a conjecture in perfect harmony with this view. It appears by the titles of four out of these six Psalms, that they were composed by David while flying and hiding from the persecutions of Saul. What, then, should hinder us from imagining that they were inscribed on the rocks and on the sides of the caves which so often formed his place of refuge? This view would accord with the strict etymological meaning of the word, and explain the rendering of the Septuagint. *John Jebb*, in "*A Literal Translation of the Book of Psalms*," 1846. (See also Explanatory Notes on Psalms 6 and 56. "Treasury of David", Vol. 1., pp. 222-23; Vol. 3, p. 40.)

**Whole Psalm.** Kimchi says this Psalm was written on account of Abner, and the rest of Saul's princes, who judged David as a rebel against the government, and said it was for Saul to pursue after him to slay him; for if they had restrained him, Saul would not have pursued after him; and indeed they seem to be wicked judges who are addressed in this Psalm; *do not destroy*. Arama says, it declares the wickedness of Saul's judges. *John Gill*.

**Verse 1.** *Are ye dumb (when) ye (should) speak righteousness (and) judge equitably, sons of men?* The first words are exceedingly obscure. One of them mla, not expressed in the English, and the ancient versions, means *dumbness*, as in Ps 61:1, and seems to be here used as a strong expression for *entirely speechless*. In what respect they were thus dumb, is indicated by the verb which follows, but the connection can be made clear in English only by a circumlocution. The interrogation, *are ye indeed*, expresses wonder, as at something scarcely credible. Can it be so? Is it possible? are you really silent, you, whose very office is to speak for God, and against the sins of men? *Joseph Addison Alexander*.

**Verse 1.** *O congregation, O band, or company.* The Hebrew *alem*, which hath the signification of *binding as a sheaf or bundle*, seemeth here to be a company that are combined or confederate. *Henry Ainsworth.*

**Verse 2.** *In heart ye work wickedness*, etc. The psalmist doth not say, they had wickedness in their heart, but that they did work it there: the heart is a shop within, an underground shop; there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes, and fit them into actions; yea, *they weighed the violence of their hands in the earth*. That's an allusion to merchants, who buy and sell by weight; they weigh their commodity to an ounce; they do not give it out in gross, but by exact weight. This saith the psalmist, *they weigh the violence of their hands*; they do not oppress grossly, but with a kind of exactness and skill, they sit down and consider what and how much violence they may use in such a case, or how much such a person may endure, or such a season may bear. They are wiser than to do all at once, or all to one, lest they spoil all. They *weigh* what they do, though what they do be so bad that it will hold no weight when God comes to weigh it. Nor do they arrive at this skill presently, but after they have, as it were, served an apprenticeship at it; and they bind themselves to the trade very early; for as it follows at the third verse of the Psalm, *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies*, that is, they are estranged both by nature and by early practice; they lose no time, they go to it young, even "as soon as they are born," "as soon as they are fit for any use, or to do any thing, they are using and setting themselves to do wickedly. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 2.** The word *wickedness* properly signifies the *inclinations of scales*, when the scale weighs down to one side; then it is transferred to respect of persons, to injustice and iniquity, especially in public tribunals and decisions, as in Ps 82:2, *How long will ye judge lwe by an unjust inclination of the scales?* *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 2.** The principles of the wicked are even worse than their practices: premeditated violence is doubly guilty. *George Rogers.*

**Verse 3.** *The wicked are estranged from the womb*, etc. How early men do sin! How late they do repent! *As soon as they are born* "they go astray," but if left to themselves they will not return till they die; they will never return. Children can neither go nor speak as soon as born, but as soon as born they can "go astray" and "speak lies;" that is, their first speaking is lying, and their first going is straying; yea, when they cannot go naturally, they can go astray morally or metaphorically: the first step they are able to take is a step out of the way. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 3.** *They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* Of all sins, no sin can call Satan father like to lying. All the corruption that is in us came from Satan, but yet this sin of forging and lying is from the devil more than any; tastes of the devil more than any. Hence every man is a liar (Ro 3:4), and so every man is every sinner else; but in a special manner every man is a liar; for that the very

first depravation of our nature came in by lying, and our nature doth taste much still of this old block to be given to lying, the devil also breathing into us a strong breath to stir us up to lying. Hence *no sooner do we speak but we lie*. As we are in body, subject to all diseases, but yet, some to one sickness rather than to another: so in the soul, all are apt enough to all sin, and some rather to one vice than to another; but all are much inclined to lying. A liar then is as like the devil as ever he can look: as unlike to God as ever he can be. *Richard Capel, 1586-1656, in "Tentations, their Nature, Danger, Cure."*

**Verse 3.** The figure of the wicked going astray as soon as they are born, seems to be taken from the disposition and power of a young serpent soon after its birth. The youngest serpent can convey poison to anything which it bites; and the suffering in all cases is great, though the bite is seldom fatal. Place a stick near the reptile whose age does not amount to many days, and he will immediately snap at it. The offspring of the tiger and of the alligator are equally fierce in their earliest habits. *Joseph Roberts, in "Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures," 1844.*

**Verse 4. Poison.** There is such a thing as poison; but where to be found? *Ubi cunq; fuerit, in homine quis quaereret?* Wheresoever it is, in man who would look for it? God made man's body of the dust; he mingled no poison with it. He inspires his soul from heaven; he breathes no poison with it. He feeds him with bread; he conveys no poison with it. *Unde venenum?* Whence is the poison? Mt 13:27—"Didst not thou, O Lord, sow good seed in thy field?" *Unde zizaniae*—"From whence then hath it tares?" Whence? *Hoc fecit inimicus*—"The enemy hath done this." We may perceive the devil in it. That great serpent, the red dragon, hath poured into wicked hearts this poison. His own poison, *malitiam*, wickedness. *Cum infundit peccatum, infundit venenum*—"When he pours in sin he pours in poison." Sin is poison. Original depravity is called corruption; actual poison. The violence and virulence of this venomous quality comes not at first. *Nemo fit repente pessimus*—No man becomes worst at the first dash. We are born corrupt, we have made ourselves poisonous. There be three degrees, as it were so may ages, in sin. *First*—secret sin; an ulcer lying in the bones, but skinned over with hypocrisy. *Secondly*—open sin, bursting forth into manifest villany. The former is corruption, the second is eruption. *Thirdly*—frequented and confirmed sin, and that is rank poison, envenoming soul and body. *Thomas Adams, 1614.*

**Verse 4. Adder.** Hebrew ntb *pethen*, the Egyptian cobra (*Naja hage*), one of the venomous *Colubrine* Snakes (*Colubri*). This is one of the so called hooded snakes, with which serpent charmers chiefly deal. The Spectacled Snake proper (*Naja tripudians*) is a closely related species. The well known Cobra di Capello is another. They are all noted for their deadly bite. The hollow fangs communicate with a poison gland, which being pressed in the act of biting, sends a few drops into the puncture. The venom quickly acts on the whole system, and death soon ensues. *John Duns, D.D., in "Biblical Natural Science," 1868.*

**Verse 4. *The deaf adder.*** Certain it is, says a modern writer upon the Psalms, that the common adder or viper here in England, the bite of which too, by the way, is very venomous, if it is not wholly *deaf*, has the sense of hearing very imperfectly. This is evident from the danger there is of treading upon these animals, unless you happen to see them; for if they do not see you, and you do not disturb them, they never endeavour to avoid you, which when they are disturbed and do see you, they are very solicitous of doing. Allowing, then, that there is a species of these noxious animals, which either not having the sense of hearing at all, or having it only in a low degree, may very well be said to be deaf; this may help to explain the present poetical passage of the psalmist. He very elegantly compares the pernicious and destructive practices of wicked men to the venom of a serpent; and his mentioning this species of animals, seems to have brought to his mind another property of at least one sort of them, in which they likewise resembled perverse and obstinate sinners, who are deaf to all advice, utterly irreclaimable, and not to be persuaded. This the adder resembled, which is a very venomous animal, and moreover is deaf, or very near it. And perhaps his saying that *she stoppeth her ear*, may be no more than a poetical expression for deafness; just as the *mole*, which in common speech is said to be *blind*, might in a poetical phrase, be said to shut her eyes; as in fact she does when you expose her to the light. The next clause, *Which refuseth to hear*, etc., is another poetical expression for the same thing. *Samuel Burder, in "The Scripture Expositor," 1810.*

**Verse 4. *The deaf adder.*** Several of the serpent tribe are believed to be either quite deaf, or very dull of hearing. Perhaps that which is called the *puddeyan*, the "beaver serpent," is more so than any other. I have frequently come close up to these reptiles; but they did not make any effort to move out of the way. They lurk in the path, and the victim on whom they pounce will expire within a few minutes after he is bitten. *Joseph Roberts.*

**Verse 4. *The deaf adder.*** The *adder*, or *asp*, is the *haje naja*, or *cobra* of Egypt, according to Cuvier. The hearing of all the serpent tribes is imperfect, as all are destitute of a tympanic cavity, and of external openings to the ear. The *deaf adder* is not a particular species. The point of the rebuke is, the *pathen*, or "adder," here in question, *could* hear in some degree but *would* not; just as the unrighteous judges, or persecutors, of David could hear with their outward ears such appeals as he makes in Ps 58:1-2, but would not. The charmer usually could charm the serpent by shrill sounds, either of his voice or of the flute, the serpent's comparative deafness rendering it the more amenable to those sounds which it could hear. But exceptional cases occurred of a *deaf adder* which was *deaf* only in the sense that it refused to hear, or to be acted on. Also Jer 8:17; compare Ec 10:11. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 4. *The deaf adder that stoppeth her ear.*** With respect to what is said of the animal's stopping its ears, it is not necessary to have recourse to the supposition of its actually doing so, which by some persons has been stated, but it is sufficient to know, that whilst some serpents are operated upon in

the manner above described, others are partly or altogether insensible to the incantation. *Richard Mant.*

**Verse 4.** (*second clause*). This clause admits of a different construction, *like the deaf adder he stops his ear*, which some interpreters prefer, because an adder cannot stop its ears, and need not stop them if naturally deaf, whereas it is by stopping his, the wicked man becomes like a deaf adder. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verses 4-5.** Experienced and skilful as the serpent charmers are, however, they do not invariably escape with impunity. Fatal terminations to these exhibitions of the psyllid art now and then occur; for there are still to be found "*deaf adders, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.*"... Roberts mentions the instance of a man who came to a gentleman's house to exhibit tame snakes, and on being told that a cobra, or hooded snake, was in a cage in the house, was asked if he could charm it; on his replying in the affirmative, the serpent was released from the cage, and no doubt, in a state of high irritation. The man began his incantation, and repeated his charms; but the snake darted at him, fastened upon his arm, and before night he was a corpse. *Philip Henry Gosse, in "The Romance of Natural History," 1861.*

**Verses 4-5.** One day a rattlesnake entered our encampment. Among us was a Canadian who could play the flute, and who, to divert us, marched against the serpent with his new species of weapon. On the approach of his enemy, the haughty reptile curls himself into a spiral line, flattens his head, inflates his cheeks, contracts his lips, displays his envenomed fangs and his bold throat; his tongue flows like two flames of fire; his eyes are burning coals; his body swollen with rage, rises and falls like the bellows of a forge; his dilated skin assumes a dull and scaly appearance; and his tail, whence proceeds the death announcing sound, vibrates with such rapidity as to resemble a light vapour. The Canadian begins to play upon his flute—the serpent starts with surprise, and draws back his head. In proportion as he is struck with the magic notes, his eyes lose their fierceness; the oscillations of his tail become slower and the sounds which it makes become weaker, and gradually die away. Less perpendicular upon their spiral line, the rings of the charmed serpent are by degrees expanded, and sink one after another on the ground in concentric circles. The shades of azure, green, white, and gold recover their brightness on his quivering skin, and slightly turning his head, he remains motionless, in the attitude of attention and pleasure. At this moment the Canadian advances a few steps, producing from his flute sweet and simple notes. The serpent, inclining his variegated neck, opens a passage with the head through the high grass, and begins to creep after the musician; stopping when he stops, and beginning to follow him again as soon as he advances forward. In this manner he was led out of the camp, attended by a great number of spectators, both savages and Europeans, who could scarcely believe their eyes, which had witnessed this effect of harmony. *Francois Aguste, Viscount de Chateaubriand, 1768-1848.*

**Verses 4-5.** The serpent, when she begins to feel the charmer, clappeth one ear presently to the ground, and stoppeth the other ear with her tail, although by hearkening to the charmer, as some observe, she would be provoked to spit out her poison, and renew her age. (This is a specimen of the old fashioned *un-natural* history. No one will be misled by it. *C. H. S.*) So hot is man upon his harlot sin, that he is deaf to all that would counsel him to the contrary; he stops his ear, hardens his heart, stiffens his neck against the thunders of the law, the still voice of the gospel, the motions of the Spirit, and the convictions of his own conscience. When sin calls, they run through thick and thin for haste; when the world commands, how readily do they hearken, how quickly do they hear, how faithfully do they obey! but when the blessed God cries to them, charges them by his unquestionable authority, beseeches them for their own unchangeable felicity, they, like statues of men, rather than living creatures, stand still and stir not at all. Other things move swiftly to their centres; stones fall tumbling downward, sparks fly apace upward, coneys run with speed to their burrows, rivers with violence to the ocean, and yet silly man hangs off from his Maker, that neither entreaties nor threatenings, nor the word, nor the works of God, nor the hope of heaven, nor fear of hell, can quicken or hasten him to his happiness. Who would imagine that a reasonable soul should act so much against sense and reason? *George Swinnock, 1627-1673.*

**Verse 5.** *Will not hearken.* The Lord hath some of his elect ones whom he seeth walking in bypaths and crooked ways: the Lord giveth a commission to his servants, the ministers, and saith, Go invite and call yon soul to come to me, and say, Return, O Shulamite; but the soul stirs not: the Lord sends and calls again: yet with the deaf adder, he hearkeneth not to the voice of the enchanter: well, saith the Lord, "If you will not come; I will fetch you"; if fair means will not do, foul means must; then he hisses for the fly and the bee of affliction, and calls forth armies of trouble, and gives them commission to seize upon, and to lay siege to such a man or woman, and saith, Ply them with your cannon shot, till you make them yield, give up the keys and strike the sail; he sends sickness to their bodies, a consumption to their estate, death to their friends, shame to their reputation, a fire to their house, and the like, and bids them prey and spoil, till they see and acknowledge the hand of the Lord lifted up. *J. Votier's "Survey of Effectual Calling," 1652.*

**Verse 6.** *Break their teeth,* destroy the fangs of these serpents, in which *their poison* is contained. This will amount to the same meaning as above. Save me from the *adders*, the sly and poisonous slanderers: save me also from the *lions*—the tyrannical and bloodthirsty men. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 6.** *Great teeth.* *mwetlm*, according to Michaelis and Gesenius, are the *eye teeth*, which in lions are sharp and terrible. *George Phillips, B.D., in "The Psalms in Hebrew: With a Commentary," 1846.*

**Verses 6-9.** David's enemies were strong and fierce as young lions: he therefore prayed that *their teeth might be broken*, even their strongest teeth, their *grinders*, with which they were ready to devour him; that so they might be disabled from doing mischief. They overwhelmed him like an

inundation: but he desired it might prove a land flood, which is soon wasted. They were about to shoot at him: but he would have their bows, or their arrows, to be shivered to pieces, and become like straw, and do no execution, and he prayed that they might waste insensibly as the snail, which leaves its substance all along its track; and that they might come to nothing, like an abortion. He also predicted, that their prosperous rage (which resembled the crackling of thorns under a pot), would soon be extinct, and produce no effect; while the Lord in his wrath would hurry them into speedy destruction; as a furious whirlwind drives a living man down a precipice, or into a dreadful pit.  
*Thomas Scott, 1747-1821.*

**Verse 8.** *As a snail which melteth away as it goeth*, literally, *which goeth in melting* (or slime), the noun being in the accusative as describing the nature of the action, and the allusion being to the slimy trail which the snail leaves behind it, so that *it seems* to waste away. Evidently this is nothing more than a poetical hyperbole, and need not be explained, therefore, as a popular error or a mistake in natural history.—J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D., in "The Book of Psalms; a New *Translation, with Introduction and Notes,*" 1864.

**Verse 8.** *As a snail which melteth*, etc. This is a very remarkable and not very intelligible passage. The Jewish Bible renders the passage in a way which explains the idea which evidently prevailed at the time the Psalms were composed: "As a snail let him melt as he passeth on." The ancients had an idea that the slimy track made by a snail as it crawled along was subtracted from the substance of its body, and that in consequence the farther it crept the smaller it became until at last it wasted entirely away. The commentators on the Talmud took this view of the case. The Hebrew word, *lwlv shablul*, which undoubtedly does signify a snail of some kind, is thus explained:—"The Shablul is a creeping thing; when it comes out of its shell, saliva pours from itself until it becomes liquid, and so dies." Other explanations of this passage have been offered, but there is no doubt that the view taken by these commentators is the correct one, and that the psalmist, when he wrote the terrible series of denunciations in which the passage occurs, had in his mind the popular belief regarding the gradual wasting away of the snail as it "passeth on." It is needless to say that no particular species of snail is mentioned, and almost as needless to state that in Palestine there are many species of snails, to any or all of which these words are equally applicable. *J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

**Verse 8.** *The untimely birth of a woman.* The wicked are all, so speak, human abortions; they are and for ever remain defective beings, who have not accomplished the great purpose of their existence. Heaven is the one end for which man is created, and he who falls short of it does not attain the purpose of his being; he is an eternal abortion. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

**Verse 8.** (*second clause*). David when he curseth the plots of wicked men, that though they have conceived mischief, and though they have gone with it a long time, and are ready to bring it forth, yet saith he, *Let them be* (that is, let their counsels and designs be) like the untimely birth of a woman,

that they may not see the *sun*: that is, let them be dashed and blasted, let them never bring forth their poisonous brood to the hurt and trouble of the world. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 9.** (*first clause*). *Before your cooking vessels*, etc. It would puzzle Oedipus himself to make any tolerable sense of the English translation of this verse. It refers to the usage of travellers in the East, who when journeying through the deserts, make a hasty blaze with the thorns which they collect, some green and full of sap, others dry and withered, for the purpose of dressing their food; in which circumstances, violent storms of wind not infrequently arise, which sweep away their fuel and entire apparatus, before the vessels which they use become warm by the heat. An expressive and graphical image of the overwhelming ruin of wicked men. *William Walford*, 1837.

**Verse 9.** *Before your pots feel the bramble*. By this proverbial expression the psalmist describes the sudden eruption of the divine wrath; sudden and violent as the ascension of the dry bramble underneath the housewife's pot. The brightness of the flame which this material furnishes, the height to which it mounts in an instant, the fury with which it seems to rage on all sides of the vessel, give force, and even sublimity to the image, though taken from one of the commonest occurrences of the lower life—a cottager's wife boiling her pot! The sense, then, will be: "Before your pots feel the bramble, he shall sweep them away in whirlwind and hurricane." *Samuel Horsley*, 1733-1806.

**Verse 9.** In all the book of God I do not remember any sentence so variously and differently translated as this verse... This variety of translations ariseth chiefly from the original Hebrew word *twrym siroth*, which in the Hebrew tongue signifies, first, *pots* or *cauldrons*, wherein flesh is sod, as Ex 16:3 38:3 Eze 11:11. Secondly, *thorns*, and *pricks* of thorns and briers, as Isa 34:13 Ho 2:8. Thirdly, because the pricks of the great bramble are very sharp and hooked, this word is used to signify fishhooks. Am 4:2. In all our English Bibles of the old, new, and Geneva translation, and some Latin Bibles, this word is taken to signify pots or cauldrons; but the Septuagint, Hierome, vulgar Latin, Austine, Pagnine, Tremellius, and all others that I have seen, take this word in the second sense, for the sharp pricks of thorns and brambles. Here, certainly, this word signifies the sharp pricks of the great dog bramble, which here in the Hebrew text is *dj atad*, and is used (Jud 9:14-15) in Jotham's parable to signify the bramble, which being made king of the trees, kindled a fire, which devoured the cedars of Lebanon. Now this bramble in the body, and every branch of it, is beset with sharp hooked pricks, some of which are green and have life and moisture in them, and though they be sharp, yet they are not so stiff and strong as to make any deep wound in a man's flesh. Others are greater, more hooked, and hardened by drying and parching with the vehement heat of the sun; and they strike to the quick, and hold fast, or tear where they catch hold of man's skin or flesh. The first are here called *dja*, living or green; the other are called, *nwrx*, dried, or parched and hardened; and the prophetic psalmist affirms that "God who judgeth in the earth, will take away and destroy as with a tempestuous whirlwind, every one of them, as well the green as the dry, "as Tremellius out of the

original doth most truly translate the word... The whole text runs thus: "Before they feel your thorns or pricks, O ye bramble, he will take away every one as with a whirlwind, as well the green as the dry." *Before they*, that is, the righteous whom ye hate and persecute; *do feel*, that is, have a full sense and understanding of your thorns or pricks, that is, of the sharpness, fury, and mischief which is in the heart and hand of all and every one among you; for every one in your band and congregation is a grievous thorn and sharp prick of the cursed bramble, sharply set and bent to do mischief in malice and fury to the people and church of God. "He that is God who judgeth in the earth" (as it is expressed in the eleventh verse, in the last words) "will take away as with a whirlwind" (that is, scatter and destroy tempestuously), "every one, as well the living and green as the dry and hardened." That is, of every sort banded together, as well the green headed and young persecutors, sharp set, but not so strong to hurt, as the old and dry who are hardened in malice by long custom, and in power and policy are strong to do mischief. *George Walker, in a Fast Sermon before the House of Commons, 1644.*

**Verse 10.** *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* When the just man seeth the vengeance and rejoiceth, it is not of malice, but of benevolence, either hoping that the wicked may by punishment be amended, or loving God's justice above men's persons, not being displeased with the punishment of the wicked, because it proceedeth from the Lord, nor desiring that the wicked may be acquitted from penalty because they deserve in justice to be punished. *Nicholas Gibbens.*

**Verse 10.** *The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance.* Not that he shall be glad of the vengeance purely as it is a hurt, or a suffering to the creature, but the righteous shall be glad when he seeth the vengeance of God, as it is a fulfilling of the threatening of God against the sin of man, and so evidence of his own holiness. Ps 59:9-10. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 10.** *He shall; wash his feet,* etc. That is, he gets comfort and encouragement by seeing the Lord avenge his cause against his adversaries. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 10.** *He shall wash his feet in the blood,* etc. As the victorious survivor of a conflict, walking over the battle field, might be said to do. *R. T. Society's Notes.*

**Verse 10..** When angels execute God's judgments upon sinners, the saints see much in it; they see matter of fear and praise; of fear, in that God's power, wrath, and hatred are manifested in them against sin and sinners; of praise, in that themselves are delivered and justice performed. When the wicked are taken away by a divine stroke, by the hand of justice, and God hath the glory of his justice, *the righteous rejoice at it:* but is that all? No, *he washes his feet in the blood of the wicked;* that is, by this judgment he fears and reforms. It is a metaphor taken from the practice of those parts where they went barefoot, or with sandals, and so contracted much filth, and used to wash and cleanse their feet when they came in; so here, the godly seeing the hand of God upon the wicked, fears, and judges himself for his sins, purges his conscience and affections, and stands now in awe

of that God who hath stricken the wicked for those sins which he himself in part is guilty of. Waldus, a man of note in Lyons, seeing one struck dead in his presence, he washed his hands in his blood; for presently he gave alms to the poor, instructed his family in the true knowledge of God, and exhorted all that came unto him to repentance and holiness of life. *William Greenhill, 1691-1777.*

**Verse 10.** No doubt, at the sight of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim destroyed, angels saw cause to rejoice and sing, "Hallelujah." Wickedness was swept away; earth was lightened of a burden; justice, the justice of God, was highly exalted; love to his other creatures was displayed in freeing them from the neighbourhood of hellish contaminations. On the same principles (entering, however, yet deeper into the mind of the Father, and sympathising to the full in his justice), the Lord Jesus himself, and each one of his members shall cry, "Hallelujah," over Antichrist's ruined hosts. *Re 19:3. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.* He shall be refreshed at the end of his journey (*Joh 13:5 Lu 7:44 Ge 18:4*), he shall wipe off all the dust of the way, and end its weariness by entering into that strange, that divine joy over sin destroyed, justice honoured, the law magnified, vengeance taken for the insult done to Godhead, the triumph of the Holy One over the unholy. It is not merely *the time when* the joy begins—it is also the occasion and cause of that day's rapturous delight. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 10.** A broad and vital distinction is to be made between *desire for the gratification of personal vengeance*, and zeal for the vindication *of the glory of God*. "The glory of God" includes necessarily the real good of the offender and the well being of society. Desire for *retaliation* is always wrong; desire for *retribution* may be in the highest degree praiseworthy. For personal motives only can I desire retaliation upon the wrong doer; but for motives most disinterested and noble I may desire retribution. *R. A. Bertram, in "The Imprecatory Psalms," 1867.*

**Verse 11.** *So that a man shall say, Verily,* etc. This shall be said not by a *man*, nor by any particular man, but by men in general, by man as opposed to God. The particle translated, *verily* really means *only*, and denotes that this and nothing else is true. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 11.** *So that,* etc. There is something worth noting from the connexion of this verse with the context, and is implied in the first word, *so that*, which joins this verse with the former parts of this Psalm, and shows this to be an illation from them. What? did God so suddenly, "as with a whirlwind," overthrow those wicked judges who lorded it over his people? did he make those "lions" melt like snails? did he confirm the joints of his people, which were little before, trembling and smiting on against another, as if they had been so many forlorn wretches exposed and cast forth, and no eye to pity them; as if they had been floating with Moses upon the sea in a basket of bulrushes, without any pilot to guide them, and even ready to cry out with the disciple, "Master, carest not that we perish?" Did he then command a calm, and bring them to the haven where they would be? did he turn their howling like dragons and chattering like cranes, under the whips and saws of tyrannical taskmasters,

into a song of joy and triumph? did he dismantle himself of that cloud wherein for a time he had so enveloped himself, that he seemed not to behold the pressures of his people? did he, I say, then step in to his people's rescue, by breaking their yokes as in the day of Midian, and kissing them with kisses of his mouth? *So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* Observe: Though the passages of God's providence may seem so rugged and uncouth, as if they were destructive to his church, and likely to put out the eye of his own glory; yet our God will so dispose of them in the close, that they shall have an advantageous tendency, to the setting forth of his honour and our good. *John Hinckley, 1657.*

**Verse 11.** Some of the judgments of God are a shallow, or a ford, over which a lamb may wade; every child may read the meaning of them; and a *man*—any ordinary man—*may say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 11.** This judging here does not refer to the judgment to come, at the last day, when there shall be a general convention of quick and dead before the Lord's dreadful tribunal; though so, it is most true *affore tempus*, that there will be a time when God will ride his circuit here in a solemn manner, so *that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth;* but that is not the scope of this place. It is in the present tense, *o krinwn, that now judgeth, or is now judging* the earth and the inhabitants thereof; and therefore it must be understood of a judgment on this side, the judgment of the great day; and so God judges the earth, or in the earth, three manner of ways. First, by a providential ordering and wise disposal of all the affairs of all creatures. Secondly, in relieving the oppressed, and pleading the cause of the innocent. Thirdly, in overthrowing and plaguing the wicked doers. *John Hinckley.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 3.**

1. The natural effects of original sin are seen in early suffering and death.
2. Its moral effects are seen in the early commission of actual sin.
3. Early depravity is evinced in the conscious guilt of telling lies. *G. R.*

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). The inner pandemonium, or the calendar of the heart's crime.

**Verse 4.** (*first clause*). A generation of serpents. *T. Adams's Sermon.*

**Verse 4.** Sin as a poison. Poisons may be attractive in colour and taste, slow or rapid in action, painful in effect, withering, soporific or maddening. In all cases deadly.

**Verse 5.** The serpent charmer.

1. He charms with moral persuasion, promise, threatening, etc.
2. He charms wisely, earnestly, affectionately, argumentively.
3. He charms in vain; the will is averse. Hence the need of divine grace and of the gospel.

**Verse 8.** The snail like course of ungodly men. Their sin destroys their property, health, time, influence, life.

**Verse 11.** Remarkable cases of divine judgments and their results.

## **Psalm 59**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

To the Chief Musician. Strange that the painful events in David's life should end in enriching the repertoire of the national minstrelsy. Out of a sour, ungenerous soil spring up the honey bearing flowers of psalmody. Had he never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God in after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints. Affliction is the tuner of the harps of sanctified songsters. *Altaschith*. Another "destroy not" Psalm. Whom God preserves Satan cannot destroy. The Lord can even preserve the lives of his prophets by the very ravens that would naturally pick out their eyes. David always found a friend to help him when his case was peculiarly dangerous, and that friend was in his enemy's household; in this instance it was Michal, Saul's daughter, as on former occasions it had been Jonathan, Saul's son. *Michtam of David*. This is the Fifth of the Golden Secrets of David: God's chosen people have many such. *When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him*. Great efforts were made to carry the Psalms away to other authors and seasons than those assigned in the headings, it being the fashion just now to prove one's learning by disagreeing with all who have gone before. Perhaps in a few years the old titles will be as much revered as they are now rejected. There are spasms in these matters, and in many other things among the would be "intellectuals" of the schools. We are not anxious to show our readiness at conjecture, and therefore are content with reading this Psalm in the light of the circumstances here mentioned; it does not seem unsuitable to any verse, and in some the words are very appropriate to the specified occasion.

**DIVISION.** In Ps 59:1-2 he prays, in Ps 59:3-4 he complains of his woes, and again in Ps 59:5 he prays. Here he inserts a Selah, and ends one portion of his song. In Ps 59:6-7 he renews his complaint, in Ps 59:8-10 declares his confidence in God, and in Ps 59:11-13 lifts up his heart in prayer; closing another part of his Psalm with Selah. Then he prays again in Ps 59:14-15, and afterwards betakes himself to singing.

EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God.* They were all round the house with the warrant of authority, and a force equal to the carrying of it out. He was to be taken dead or alive, well or ill, and carried to the slaughter. No prowess could avail him to break the cordon of armed men, neither could any eloquence stay the hand of his bloody persecutor. He was taken like a bird in a net, and no friend was near to set him free. Unlike the famous starling, he did not cry, "I cannot get out," but his faith uttered quite another note. Unbelief would have suggested that prayer was a waste of breath, but not so thought the good man, for he makes it his sole resort. He cries for deliverance and leaves ways and means with his God. Defend me from them that rise up against me. Saul was a king, and therefore sat in high places, and used all his authority to crush David; the persecuted one therefore beseeches the Lord to set him on high also, only in another sense. He asks to be lifted up, as into a lofty tower, beyond the reach of his adversary. Note how he sets the title, *My God*, over against the word, *mine enemies*. This is the right method of effectually catching and quenching the fiery darts of the enemy upon the shield of faith. God is our God, and therefore deliverance and defence are ours.

**Verse 2.** *Deliver me from the workers of iniquity.* Saul was treating him very unjustly, and besides that was pursuing a tyrannical and unrighteous course towards others, therefore David the more vehemently appeals against him. Evil men were in the ascendant at court, and were the ready tools of the tyrant, against these also he prays. Bad men in a bad cause may be pleaded against without question. When a habitation is beset by thieves, the good man of the house rings the alarm bell; and in these verses we may hear it ring out loudly, "*deliver me, defend me, deliver me, save me.*" Saul had more cause to fear than David had, for the invincible weapon of prayer was being used against him, and heaven was being aroused to give him battle. And save me from bloody men. As David remembers how often Saul had sought to assassinate him, he knows what he has to expect from that quarter and from the king's creatures and minions who were watching for him. David represents his enemy in his true colours before God; the bloodthirstiness of the foe is a fit reason for the interposition of the righteous God, for the Lord abhors all those who delight in blood.

**Verse 3.** *For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul.* They were in ambuscade for the good man's life. He knew their design and cried to God to be rescued from it. Like wild beasts they crouched, and waited to make the fatal spring; but their victim used effectual means to baffle them, for he laid the matter before the Lord. While the enemy lies waiting in the posture of a beast, we wait before God in the posture of prayer, for God waits to be gracious to us and terrible towards our foes. The mighty are gathered against me. None of them were absent from the muster when a saint was to be murdered. They were too fond of such sport to be away. The men at arms who ought to have been fighting their country's battles, are instead thereof hunting a quiet citizen; the gigantic monarch is spending all his strength to slay a faithful follower. Not for my transgression, not for my sin, O Lord. He appeals to Jehovah that he had done no ill. His only fault was, that he was too valiant and too gracious, and

was, besides, the chosen of the Lord, therefore the envious king could not rest till he had washed his hands in the blood of his too popular rival. We shall always find it to be a great thing to be innocent; if it does not carry our cause before an earthly tribunal, it will ever prove the best of arguments in the court of conscience, and a standing consolation when we are under persecution. Note the repetition of his declaration of integrity. David is sure of his innocence. He dares repeat the plea.

**Verse 4.** *They run and prepare themselves without my fault.* They are all alive and active, they are swift to shed blood. They prepare and use their best tactics; they besiege me in my house, and lay their ambuscades as for some notable enemy. They come up fully armed to the attack, and assail me with all the vigour and skill of a host about to storm a castle; and all for no cause, but out of gratuitous malice. So quick are they to obey their cruel master, that they never stay to consider whether their errand is a good one or not; they run at once, and buckle on their harness as they run. To be thus gratuitously attacked is a great grief. To a brave man the danger causes little distress of mind compared with the injustice to which he is subjected. It was a cruel and crying shame that such a hero as David should be hounded down as if he were a monster, and beset in his house like a wild beast in its den. Awake to help me, and behold. When others go to sleep, keep thou watch, O God. Put forth thy might. Arouse thee from thy inaction. Only look at thy servant's sad condition and thy hand will be sure to deliver me. We see how thorough was the psalmist's faith in the mercy of his Lord, for he is satisfied that if the Lord do but look on his case it will move his active compassion.

**Verse 5.** *Thou, thyself, work for me personally, for the case needs thine interposition.* Therefore, because I am unjustly assailed, and cannot help myself. O Lord, ever living, *God of Hosts*, able to rescue me; the God of Israel, pledged by covenant to redeem thine oppressed servant; awake to visit all the heathen, arouse thy holy mind, bestow thy sacred energies, punish the heathen among thine Israel, the false hearted who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. And when thou art about the business, let all the nations of thine enemies, and all the heathenish people at home and abroad know that thou art upon circuit, judging and punishing. It is the mark of a thoughtful prayer that the titles which are in it applied to God are appropriate, and are, as it were, congruous to the matter, and fitted to add force to the argument. Shall Jehovah endure to see his people oppressed? Shall the God of hosts permit his enemies to exult over his servant? Shall the faithful God of a chosen people leave his chosen to perish? The name of God is, even in a literal sense, a fortress and high tower for all his people. What a forceful petition is contained in the words, "*awake to visit!*" Actively punish, in wisdom judge, with force chastise. Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Be merciful to them as men, but not as transgressors; if they continue hardened in their sin, do not wink at their oppression. To wink at sin in transgressors will be to leave the righteous under their power, therefore do not pass by their offences but deal out the due reward. The psalmist feels that the overthrow of oppression which was so needful for himself must be equally desirable for multitudes of the godly

placed in like positions, and therefore he prays for the whole company of the faithful, and against the entire confraternity of traitors. Selah. With such a subject before us we may well pause. Who would not sit still and consider, when vengeance is being meted out to all the enemies of God? How wrong is that state of mind which hates to hear of the punishment of the wicked!

**Verse 6.** *They return at evening.* Like wild beasts that roam at night, they come forth to do mischief. If foiled in the light, they seek the more congenial darkness in which to accomplish their designs. They mean to break into the house in the dead of night. They make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Howling with hunger for their prey, they sneak round and round the walls, prowling with stealthy footstep, and barking in unamiable concert. David compares his foes to Eastern dogs, unowned, loathsome, degraded, lean, and hungry, and he represents them as howling with disappointment, because they cannot find the food they seek. Saul's watchmen and the cruel king himself must have raved and raged fiercely when they found the image and the pillow of goat's hair in the bed instead of David. Vain were their watchings, the victim had been delivered, and that by the daughter of the man who desired his blood. Go, ye dogs, to your kennels and gnaw your bones, for this good man is not meat for your jaws.

**Verse 7.** *Behold they belch out with their mouth.* The noisy creatures are so remarkable in their way, that attention is called to them with a *behold*. *Ecce homines*, might we not say, *Ecce canes!* Their malicious speech gushes from them as from a bubbling fountain. The wicked are voluble in slander; their vocabulary of abuse is copious, and as detestable as it is abundant. What torrents of wrathful imprecation will they pour on the godly! They need no prompters, their feelings force for themselves their own vent, and fashion their own expressions. Swords are in their lips. They speak daggers. Their words pierce like rapiers, and cleave like cutlasses. As the cushion of a lion's paw conceals his claw, so their soft ruby lips contain bloody words. For who, say they, doth hear? They are free from all restraint, they fear no God in heaven, and the government on earth is with them. When men have none to call them to account, there is no accounting for what they will do. He who neither fears God nor regards man sets out on errands of oppression with gusto, and uses language concerning it of the most atrociously cruel sort. David must have been in a singular plight when he could hear the foul talk and hideous braggings of Saul's black guards around the house. After the style in which a Cavalier would have cursed a Puritan, or Claverhouse a Coventanter, the Saulites swore at the upstarts whom the king's majesty had sent them to arrest. David called them dogs, and no doubt a pretty pack they were, a cursed cursing company of curs. When they said, "Who doth hear?" God was listening, and this David knew, and therefore took courage.

**Verse 8.** *But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them.* He speaks to God, as to one who is close at hand. He points to the liars in wait and speaks to God about them. They are laughing at me, and longing for my destruction, but thou hast the laugh of them seeing thou hast determined to send them away without

their victim, and made fools of by Michal. The greatest, cleverest, and most malicious of the enemies of the church are only objects of ridicule to the Lord; their attempts are utterly futile, they need give no concern to our faith. Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. As if David had said—What are these fellows who lie in ambush! And what is the king their master, if God be on my side? If not only these but all the heathen nations were besetting the house, yet Jehovah would readily enough disappoint them and deliver them. In the end of all things it will be seen how utterly contemptible and despicable are all the enemies of the cause and kingdom of God. He is a brave man who sees this today when the enemy is in great power, and while the church is often as one shut up and besieged in his house.

**Verse 9.** *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee.* Is my persecutor strong? Then, my God, for this very reason I will turn myself to thee, and leave my matters in thy hand. It is a wise thing to find in the greatness of our difficulties a reason for casting ourselves on the Lord.

"And when it seems no chance nor change  
From grief can set me free,  
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,  
And, patient, waits on thee."

For God is my defence, my high place, my fortress, the place of my resort in the time of my danger. If the foe be too strong for me to cope with him, I will retreat into my castle, where he cannot reach me.

**Verse 10.** *The God of my mercy shall prevent me.* God who is the giver and fountain of all the undeserved goodness I have received, will go before me and lead my way as I march onward. He will meet me in my time of need. Not alone shall I have to confront my foes, but he whose goodness I have long tried and proved will gently clear my way, and be my faithful protector. How frequently have we met with preventing mercy—the supply prepared before the need occurred, the refuge built before the danger arose. Far ahead into the future the foreseeing grace of heaven has projected itself, and forestalled every difficulty. God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. Observe that the words, *my desire*, are not in the original. From the Hebrew we are taught that David expected to see his enemies without fear. God will enable his servant to gaze steadily upon the foe without trepidation; he shall be calm, and self possessed, in the hour of peril; and ere long he shall look down on the same foes discomfited, overthrown, destroyed. When Jehovah leads the way victory follows at his heels. See God, and you need not fear to see your enemies. Thus the hunted David, besieged in his own house by traitors, looks only to God, and exults over his enemies.

**Verse 11.** *Slay them not, lest my people forget.* It argues great faith on David's part, that even while his house was surrounded by his enemies he is yet so fully sure of their overthrow, and so completely realises it in his own mind, that he puts in a detailed petition that they may not be too soon or too fully exterminated. God's victory over the craft and cruelty of the wicked is so easy and so glorious that it

seems a pity to end the conflict too soon. To sweep away the plotters all at once were to end the great drama of retribution too abruptly. Nay, let the righteous be buffeted a little longer, and let the boasting oppressor puff and brag through his little hour, it will help to keep Israel in mind of the Lord's justice, and make the brave party who side with God's champion accustomed to divine interpositions. It were a pity for good men to be without detractors, seeing that virtue shines the brighter for the foil of slander. Enemies help to keep the Lord's servants awake. A lively, vexatious devil is less to be dreaded than a sleepy, forgetful spirit which is given to slumber. Scatter them by thy power. Blow them to and fro, like chaff in the wind. Let the enemy live as a vagabond race. Make Cains of them. Let them be living monuments of divine power, advertisements of heaven's truth. To the fullest extent let divine justice be illustrated in them. And bring them down. Like rotten fruit from a tree. From the seats of power which they disgrace, and the positions of influence which they pollute, let them be hurled into humiliation. This was a righteous wish, and if it be untempered by the gentleness of Jesus, we must remember that it is a soldier's prayer, and the wish of one who was smarting under injustice and malice of no ordinary kind. O Lord, our shield. David felt himself to be the representative of the religious party in Israel, and therefore he says, *our shield*, speaking in the name of all those who make Jehovah their defence. We are in good company when we hide beneath the buckler of the Eternal; meanwhile he who is the shield of his people is the scatterer of their enemies.

**Verse 12.** *For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride.* Such dreadful language of atheism and insolence deserves a fit return. As they hope to take their victims, so let them be taken themselves, entangled in their own net, arrested in the midst of their boastful security. Sins of the lips are real sins, and punishable sins. Men must not think because their hatred gets no further than railing and blasphemy that therefore they shall be excused. He who takes the will for the deed, will take the word for the deed and deal with men accordingly. Wretches who are persecutors in talk, burners and stabbers with the tongue, shall have a reckoning for their would be transgressions. Pride though it show not itself in clothes, but only in speech, is a sin; and persecuting pride, though it pile no faggots at Smithfield, but only revile with its lips, shall have to answer for it among the unholy crew of inquisitors. And for cursing and lying which they speak. Sins, like hounds, often hunt in couples. He who is not ashamed to curse before God, will be sure to lie unto men. Every swearer is a liar. Persecution leads on to perjury. They lie and swear to it. They curse and give a lying reason for their hate. This shall not go unnoticed of the Lord, but shall bring down its recompense. How often has it happened that while haughty speeches have been fresh in the mouths of the wicked they have been overtaken by avenging providence, and made to see their mischief recoil upon themselves!

**Verse 13.** *Consume them in wrath.* As if he had changed his mind and would have them brought to a speedy end, or if spared would have them exist as ruins, he cries, *consume them*, and he redoubles

his cry, *consume them*; nay, he gives a triple note, that they may not be. Revilers of God whose mouths pour forth such filth as David was on this occasion obliged to hear, are not to be tolerated by a holy soul; indignation must flame forth, and cry to God against them. When men curse the age and the place in which they live, common humanity leads the righteous to desire that they may be removed. If they could be reformed it would be infinitely better; but if they cannot, if they must and will continue to be like mad dogs in a city, then let them cease to be. Who can desire to see such a generation perpetuated? And let them know; *i.e.*, let all the nations know, that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. He whose government is universal fixes his headquarters among his chosen people, and there in special he punishes sin. So David would have all men see. Let even the most remote nations know that the great moral Governor has power to destroy ungodliness, and does not wink at iniquity in any, at any time, or in any place. When sin is manifestly punished it is a valuable lesson to all mankind. The overthrow of a Napoleon is a homily for all monarchs, the death of a Tom Paine a warning to all infidels, the siege of Paris a sermon to all cities. Selah. Good cause there is for this rest, when a theme so wide and important is introduced. Solemn subjects ought not to be hurried over; nor should the condition of the heart while contemplating themes so high be a matter of indifference. Reader, bethink thee. Sit thou awhile and consider the ways of God with men.

**Verse 14.** Here verse six is repeated, as if the songster defied his foes and revelled in the thought of their futile search, their malice, their disappointment, their rage, their defeated vigilance, their wasted energy. He laughs to think that all the city would know how they were deceived, and all Israel would ring with the story of the image and the goats' hair in the bed. Nothing was more a subject of Oriental merriment than a case in which the crafty are deceived, and nothing more makes a man the object of derision than to be outwitted by a woman, as in this instance Saul and his base minions were by Michal. The warrior poet hears in fancy the howl of rage in the council of his foes when they found their victim clean escaped from their hands.

**Verse 16.** *Let them wander up and down for meat.* Like dogs that have missed the expected carcass, let them go up and down dissatisfied, snapping at one another, and too disappointed to be quiet and take the matter easily. And grudge if they be not satisfied. Let them act like those who cannot believe that they have lost their prey: like a herd of Oriental dogs, unhoused, unkennelled, let them prowl about seeking a prey which they shall never find. Thus the menial followers of Saul paraded the city in vain hope of satisfying their malice and their master. "Surely," say they, "we shall have him yet. We cannot endure to miss him. Perhaps he is in yonder corner, or concealed in such a hiding place. We must have him. We grudge him his life. Our lust for his blood is hot, nor can we be persuaded but that we shall light upon him." See the restlessness of wicked men; this will increase as their enmity to God increases, and in hell it will be their infinite torment. What is the state of the lost, but the condition of an ambitious camp of rebels, who have espoused a hopeless cause, and will not give it up, but are

impelled by their raging passions to rave on against the cause of God, of truth, and of his people.

**Verse 16.** *But I will sing of thy power.* The wicked howl, but I sing and will sing. Their power is weakness, but thine is omnipotence; I see them vanquished and thy power victorious, and for ever and ever will I sing of thee. Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning. When those lovers of darkness find their game is up, and their midnight howlings die away, then will I lift up my voice on high and praise the lovingkindness of God without fear of being disturbed. What a blessed morning will soon break for the righteous, and what a song will be theirs! Sons of the morning, ye may sigh tonight, but joy will come on the wings of the rising sun. Tune your harps even now, for the signal to commence the eternal music will soon be given; the morning cometh and your sun shall go no more down for ever. For thou hast been my defence. The song is for God alone, and it is one which none can sing but those who have experienced the lovingkindness of their God. Looking back upon a past all full of mercy, the saints will bless the Lord with their whole hearts, and triumph in him as the high place of their security. And refuge in the day of my trouble. The greater our present trials the louder will our future songs be, and the more intense our joyful gratitude. Had we no day of trouble, where were our season of retrospective thanksgiving? David's besetment by Saul's bloodhounds creates an opportunity for divine interposition and so for triumphant praise.

**Verse 17.** *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.* What transport is here! What a monopolising of all his emotions for the one object of praising God! Strength has been overcome by strength; not by the hero's own prowess, but by the might of God alone. See how the singer girds himself with the almightiness of God, and calls it all his own by faith. Sweet is the music of experience, but it is all for God; there is not even a stray note for man, for self, or for human helpers. For God is my defence, and the God of my mercy. With full assurance he claims possession of the Infinite as his protection and security. He sees God in all, and all his own. Mercy rises before him, undisturbed and manifold, for he feels he is undeserving, and security is with him, undisturbed and impregnable, for he knows that he is safe in divine keeping. Oh, choice song! My soul would sing it now in defiance of all the dogs of hell. Away, away, ye adversaries of my soul, the God of my mercy will keep ye all at bay—  
"Nor shall the infernal lion rend  
Whom he designs to keep."

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

This Psalm has in its stern contents something no doubt strange to our ears. But never let us omit to distinguish from each other the times and diverse economies, and to place ourselves as far as possible, in sympathy with the experience of a heart which burned for nothing more than for the glorifying of God in this world. Everything that tended to obscure the theocratic relation of God to his people, called up in the soul of David the most vehement passion. The scornful oppression with

which Saul and his venal satellites visited him, the man of God, could not but have, upon the eyes of all, the appearance as if Jehovah were no longer Lord in his own land, who inexorably adhered to his laws and rights. Treason, falsehood, and every kind of evil then prevailed unchecked. What wonder, that as formerly Moses in the wilderness was provoked against the stiff necked people, so also David, whom the awful holiness of God had already made to tremble, should feel his spirit stirred against the ungodly who surrounded him, and should say, with Job, "My bowels boiled within me." *Frederick William Krummacher, D.D., in "David, the King of Israel," 1867.*

**Verse 1.** *O my God.* There are two pleas which the psalmist makes use of; one was, that God was *his God*, Ps 59:1; the other was the *power and strength* of his *enemies*. It is a blessed thing to have the covenant to fly to in all times of straits and troubles; there is always an anchor hold of hope there. *My God*, is such a plea as infinitely over balances all other things. He has engaged himself to do his people good; and it is time for him to work when the enemy exalts himself. The church's enemies are never so near destruction as when they think they have nothing to do, but take and divide the spoil. We may plead God's promise and the enemies' power too; both are a ground of hope to a believer in Jesus. *John Hill (1711-1746), in "Sermons on Several Occasions."*

**Verse 1.** *That rise up against me.* He insists upon the strength and violence of his enemies, with the view of exciting his mind to greater fervour in the duty of prayer. These he describes as *rising up* against him, in which expression he alludes, not simple to the audacity or fierceness of their assaults, but to the eminent superiority of power which they possessed; and yet he asks that he may be lifted up on high, as it were, above the reach of this over swelling inundation. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). On the expression, *they lie in wait for my soul*, compare 1Sa 19:11, "And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life *soul* tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain;" and Ps 7:2,5. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 3.** *The mighty are gathered against me*, is rendered by Chandler, *The mighty are turned aside to lay snares against me.*

**Verse 3.** *The mighty are gathered against me.* As if he would say, "But I am weak, be thou, however, my strength, and vindicate my innocence." *Arnd.*

**Verses 3-4.** He pleads his own innocency, not as to God, but as to his persecutors. Note,

1. The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly.

2. Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward those that have behaved themselves ill towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to

God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause which he will do in due time. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 4.** *They run*, as armed warriors rushing to the assault (Ps 18:29). The Hebrew for "prepare themselves," (Heb.) means also "they *establish* themselves; "they make firm their footing, like forces assaulting a city. Job 30:14. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 4.** *They run and prepare.* The zeal and diligence of the wicked in the cause of unrighteousness might well reprove the languor and tardiness of saints in the work of faith and labour of love. In the church of God nothing is the source of more mischief than the want of true zeal and liveliness. It is only when "many run to and fro" that "knowledge shall be increased." *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 4.** *Without fault.* As it respected Saul, he was a faithful subject and an obedient son-in-law. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

**Verse 4.** *Awake to help me*, literally, *Awake to meet me.* In time of temptation the Lord seems to be absent from us, and not to observe our distress—to be, as it were, as Jesus, in the storm, is described as having been "asleep in the hinder part of the ship." Mr 4:38. But it is only an appearance; the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:4); he is always ready to come to our help when we call upon him. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

**Verse 4.** *And behold.* The expression is one which savours at once of faith and of the infirmity of the flesh. In speaking of God, as if his eyes had been hitherto shut to the wrongs which he had suffered, and needed now for the first time to be opened for the discovery of them, he expresses himself according to the weakness of our human apprehension. On the other hand, in calling upon God *to behold* his cause, he shows his faith by virtually acknowledging that nothing was hid from his providential cognisance. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 5.** *O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel.* In time of straits we should set our eyes most upon those styles of God which most serve to strengthen our faith, especially such as hold forth his power and goodwill to employ his power for us. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Lord God of hosts.* YAHVEH, *Elohim, Tsebaoth*; as in Ps 80:4,19 84:8. Compare 2Sa 5:10 1Ki 19:10,14 Ps 89:8. *From "The Psalms translated from the Hebrew, with Notes chiefly exegetical."* By *William Kay, D.D., 1871.*

**Verse 5.** *Lord God of hosts.* Some have thought this equivalent to God of battles; the true force of the epithet, however, is, "Sovereign of the stars, material hosts of heaven, and of the angels their inhabitants." *A. A. Hodge, in "Outlines of Theology," 1866.*

**Verse 5.**

1. *God of hosts*, and therefore *able*;
2. *God of Israel*, and therefore *willing.* *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 6.** *At evening.* The *evening* expresses the time of calamity and want, and alludes to the wild beasts which are wont in the *evening* to go forth in quest of prey. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 6.** *They make a noise like a dog.* The noise I heard then I shall never forget. To say that if all the sheep dogs in going to Smithfield on a market day, had been kept on the constant bark and pitted against the yelping curs upon all the carts in London, they could have given any idea of the canine uproar that now first astonished me, would be to make the feeblest of images. The whole city rang with one vast riot. Down below me, at Tophane; over about Stamboul; far away at Scutari; the whole sixty thousand dogs that are said to overrun Constantinople, appeared engaged in the most active extermination of each other, without a moment's cessation. The yelping, howling, barking, growling, and snarling, were all merged into one uniform and continuous even sound, as the noise of frogs becomes, when heard at a distance. For hours there was no lull. I went to sleep and woke again, and still, with my windows open, I heard the same tumult going on; nor was it until daybreak that anything like tranquillity was restored. *Albert Smith, in "A Month at Constantinople," 1850.*

**Verse 6.** In bringing their secret plans to bear, they are represented as hungry dogs, prowling about the city in the darkness for prey; ranging, each one with his own object, but in one common cause. To take in the full force of this metaphor it must be remembered that in Eastern cities formerly, as at the present day, it was the custom to cast out all the refuse of food—bones, offal, etc.—into the streets, which was consumed chiefly by dogs, great numbers of which were kept, as it would seem, for that particular purpose. With this idea in mind, the metaphor has great propriety in its application to Christ's enemies.

"Every evening they return  
They howl like dogs,  
And surround the city."  
—*William Hill Tucker.*

**Verses 6-7.** This is a continued metaphor, which must be well observed, of a famished and rabid dog, unable to satisfy either its hunger or thirst; and describes men, howling formerly like dogs, pursuing, seizing all good things for themselves, and devouring; but now destitute of all things, unable to quench their cupidity, despised, miserable, and desperate wanderers. Such did Saul and his messengers sent against David in Najoth Rama show themselves to be, and give the prelude to their coming misery. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verses 6-7.**

1. They are diligent about it, *They return at evening.*
2. *Mad*, and set to do it, *They make a noise like a dog*, and threaten boldly.
3. Unwearied and obdurate in their purpose: *They go round about the city.*
4. Impudent, and brag what they will do to me: *Behold, they belch out with their mouth.*
5. And their words are bloody: *Swords are in their lips.* *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 7.** *Behold, they belch out with their mouth*, etc. Bark like dogs, so Aben Ezra; or, *bubble out*, as

a fountain bubbles out with water; so they cast out their wickedness in great abundance (see Jer 6:7); the phrase denotes the abundance of evil things and wicked speeches that come out of their mouths, which showed the naughtiness of their hearts; so David's enemies blustered and threatened what they would do to him could they find him; and Christ's enemies poured out their wicked charges of blasphemy and sedition against him in great plenty, and without proof. *John Gill*.

**Verse 8.** God sees and smiles, he looks and laughs at these giants; he sits in heaven far above their reach; neither doth he much trouble himself about the matter; no more should we, but trust in him, and know that there is a counsel in heaven, that will dash the mould of all contrary counsels upon the earth, as the stone cut out of the mountain did the four great monarchies. Da 2:34. And therefore though the wicked, in the pride of his heart, doth persecute the poor; though they belch out with their mouth, and seek to double murder the innocent, by detraction and by deadly practice, yet God both hears and jeers at their madness, and will bring all their purposes to nought with little ado; nay, the very cruelty of his enemies will move God to make haste. The saints fare the better for the insolence and outrages of their enemies, whose ruin is thereby accelerated; and somewhat God will do the sooner for his people, lest the enemy exalt himself. Ps 140:8. *Abraham Wright*.

**Verse 8.** (*last clause*). In the close of the verse, mention is made of *all nations*, to intimate, that though they might equal the whole world in numbers, they would prove a mere mockery with all their influence and resources. Or the words may be read—EVEN AS *thou hast all the nations in derision*. One thing is obvious, that David ridicules the vain boasting of his enemies, who thought no undertaking too great to be accomplished by their numbers. *John Calvin*.

**Verses 8-9.**

But thou, Lord, laugh at them;

You deride all the heathen.

His strength! Toward thee will I keep watch,

For God is my high fort. *William Kay*.

**Verse 9.** *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee*. Those seem to come nearest the meaning of the psalmist, who construe the words as one continuous sentence, *I will put in trust his strength with thee*, meaning that however intemperately Saul might boast of his strength, he would rest satisfied in the assurance that there was a secret divine providence restraining his actions. We must learn to view all men as subordinated in this manner, and to conceive of their strength and their enterprises as depending upon the sovereign will of God. In my opinion, the following version is the best—*His strength is with thee, I will wait*. The words are parallel with those in the end of the Psalm, where there can be no doubt that the nominative case is employed, *My strength is with thee, I will sing*. *John Calvin*.

**Verse 9.** (*first clause*). *His strength* is great, humanly viewed; but to the eye of faith what is it! LXX, to

*kratoz moi* (—uzzi); and so most ancient versions. (The contrast is given in Ps 59:16-17.) *William Kay*.

**Verse 9.** *Will I wait upon thee*, literally, *I will keep watch to thee*, alluding to the title, "When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." David sets *watching before God*, against their *watching to kill* him. *A. R. Fausset*.

**Verse 9.** How weak soever the believer finds himself, and how powerful soever he perceives his enemy to be, it is all one to him, he hath no more to do but to put faith on work, and to wait till God works. *Because of his (that is, the enemy's) strength, I will wait upon thee*, saith he to the Lord, *for God is my defence*. *David Dickson*.

**Verse 10.** *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. Oh, how the saints sing of the love of Christ! Oh, how they sing that this love was not moved by worthiness, and it disdains all hire and price, but loves us because he loves us! De 7:8. O sing of his wonderful love, and of the *prevention* of this love of Christ: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. How,

1. It prevents thy love to him. 1Jo 4:19. *We love God, because he first loved us*.

2. It prevents our sins, as in Paul's case. Ac 4:3: *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven*.

3. It prevents our calamities. Ps 79:8; *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us*. And,

4. It prevents our endeavours. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. *John Spalding*, in "Synaxis Sacra," 1703.

**Verse 10.** (*first clause*). The psalmist was sure of mercy upon these grounds, he knew he was safe, because God was his God, and the God of his mercy: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. Some read it, *hath prevented me*; others, *doth prevent me*; and others, as in my text, *shall prevent me*. Each of these senses is exceedingly sweet and full. Take it in the first sense, *hath prevented me*; and it implies thus much, that the psalmist never was in any difficulty, temptation, or fear, but God was beforehand with him; having always the mercy ready which he stood in need of; and had given it in due season, and that when he least expected it, and it may be was least prepared for it. Take it in the second sense, *doth prevent*, it argues the psalmist's ground of confidence when all present appearances were gone; as if he had said, "God is of one mind, his thoughts are thoughts of peace, and not of evil; he may vary his providence, but his heart is the same as ever; why should I fear, why should I not hope and rejoice? for my God is a tried God, he is working for me even now. He prevents my fears, and he will prevent my falling." Take the words as they lie in my text, and it comes to the same thing. "God sees all my enemies' designs, and he is ready for them; my prayer is heard, and sure I am deliverance will come, though I know not the time of it." My design, under the Spirit's influence, is to look into my own heart and yours, and show you what wonders of providence and grace God, as *the God of our mercy*, has caused to pass before us. In discoursing on these words, I

shall enquire,

1. In what sense, or in what respects, God is *the God* of our mercy.

2. How, as the God of our mercy, he doth prevent us.

3. Apply.

I am to enquire in what respects God is said to be *the God of his people's mercy*, and it seems to include in it these three things.

1. That all the mercy which is in God's nature, is for his saints. It is a great word that (1Pe 5:10), *the God of all grace*. God has in him all sorts of grace for his saints. He hath pardoning, quickening, strengthening, comforting, and preserving grace. His mercy is rich mercy, abundant mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy. A man's riches are his glory; God glories in his mercy; it is his delight, he rests in it; and so may we, because there is an infinite inconceivable fulness of it in *him*. "With thee is the fountain of life." God distributes and parcels out this mercy, that we may conceive of it the better; hence he is called by the apostle, *The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*. 2Co 1:3. God is not called the author of our mercies, but the *Father* of them; to show how freely they come from him; they are his bowels; he is pleased with them, as the father is with his own child; dwell on the name, it is a sweet one, the *Father of mercies*. In my text, David grasps all this mercy, lays hold of it as his own mercy: *The God of my mercy shall prevent me*. That is one sense.

2. It supposes, farther, that there is a portion of mercy laid by, in the purpose of God, for every saint; a portion of mercy which he may call *his own*. This some understand to be Christ's meaning to Paul (2Co 12:9): *My grace is sufficient for thee; i.e., that grace which I have allotted for thee thou wilt find sufficient*. I knew what thou wouldst need in my eternal counsels; I have made provision beforehand; I have taken care thou shouldst have enough.

3. The words suppose, farther, that God has taken it upon him as his charge, to keep this portion of his mercy for his people. Whatever it be, soul, it is in trust for thee with him. Every saint may apply to God, as the God of every mercy which he needs. *Condensed from John Hill's Sermon*.

**Verse 10.** *God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies*. The words, *my desire*, are not in the original, and would be better omitted. The sense is—God will enable me to look down calmly upon my enemies. So Christ looked upon his murderers. So Stephen was enabled to do when they "gnashed upon him with their teeth." "All that sat in the council looking steadfastly upon him saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Ac 6:15. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

**Verse 11.** *Slay them not*, that they may be a whetstone to others' faith—as the Spartans (mentioned in Plutarch's Apothegms) refused to allow the destruction of a neighbouring city which had often called forth their armies, saying, "Destroy not the whetstone of our young men." *Andrew A. Bonar*.

**Verse 11.** *Slay them not:*

"Live loathed and long

You smiling, smooth, detested parasites."

—*W. Shakespeare.*

**Verse 11.** The enemies must serve for monuments of the divine righteousness, not less in the abiding wretchedness of their race than by their own sudden destruction. Parallel to this verse, and to Ps 59:6,14, is the curse which David utters upon Joab, in 2Sa 3:29: "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that *lacketh bread*;" then the threatening of a man of God to Eli, in 1Sa 3:36, where, after announcing the violent death of the evildoers themselves, corresponding to 1Sa 3:13 here, it is said: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him (the new high priest) for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." Christian expositors have all along drawn attention to the fact, that the substance of our verse, as that also of verses, 6, 14, has gone into fulfilment on the Jews. "They have been scattered into all lands, and must go and stand before the eyes of all Christians, as a living witness that they have crucified the true Messiah and Saviour of the world. So that if you see a Jew, think on this word." (Arndt.) *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 11.** *Slay them not*; namely, suddenly. *Scatter them.* It should seem that he hath a relation to Cain's punishment, whom God would not have killed, but would have him to be a wanderer all the days of his life for a spectacle, and an example of his judgments. Ge 4:12. Others translate it, *shake them* namely, their degree of honour and glory. *John Diodati, 1576-1649.*

**Verse 12.** *For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, etc.* Albeit the persecutors do not accomplish their purpose against the righteous; yet their pride, their brags, their lies, their slanders, their curses against the godly, are a sufficient ditty for damnation and wrath to come upon them. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 12.** *The words of their lips.* The phrase, *word of the lips*, is often used for empty loquacity and boasting; the opposite of a word that is solid and founded on fact, as in 2Ki 18:20. "Thou speakest, but it is only a *word of the lips*." Pr 14:23. "In all labour there is profit: but the *word of the lips* tendeth only to penury." *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 13.** *Consume them*, emphatically, *consume them in wrath, that they may not be*; which at first sight seems contrary to his first desire, *Slay them not*; but it is not so, for he speaks not of their life, as if he would have them so consumed, that they should not remain alive; but he desires only a consumption of their power, royalty, command, etc. And so these words are a farther explication of his second desire, *Bring them down.* He would have them so brought down and consumed in their strength, dignity, command, wealth, riches, that made them proud, that they never be able any more to oppose God, hurt his people, trample upon religion and his church; he would have them live. *William Nicholson.*

**Verse 13.** *Consume them.* I hear of sad doings in Poland, of villages burnt down, of peaceable men deported to Siberia by hundreds, of woman flogged; and when I look away to that Warsaw market place where a woman, nearly naked, is being publicly beaten, and when I see cruel Mouravieff smile as the blood jets forth from the scourged shoulders, I will not deny that I feel very much tempted to say, "Happy man, whose bullet in fair flight should empty that saddle!" Am I bloodthirsty in this? Am I vindictive? Do you condemn me for this feeling? *R. A. Bertram.*

**Verse 13.** *That they may not be.* By the word *wmg yaw*, *that they may not be*, may be understood either a vile and wretched state in general, or even total destruction. The *former* must indeed here be admitted, as is plain from the context, yet not to the exclusion of the *latter* sense; since a miserable condition, such as in a disease, issues in destruction at length. *Not to be* is evidently by no means rarely taken for to be *nobody*, to be wretched, afflicted, despised. Compare Jer 31:15. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 13.** *Selah.* Though God be in all his words *Yea* and *Amen*, yet in setting this seal of *Selah* to this doctrine, he hath testified his will that he would have all these things the better understood and the deeper imprinted; that if the wicked go on to persecute the godly, *Selah*, assuredly God will have them in derision; *Selah*, assuredly God shall shiver their bones, shake their best actions, and discover their impurity; *Selah*, assuredly God's hand shall be heavy upon them, and they shall not discern it to be his hand till they are consumed. *Selah*, assuredly, verily, amen, this is a faithful, an infallible truth; as the Lord liveth it shall be so. *Abraham Wright.*

**Verse 14.** *Dog.* Is it the influence of Christianity extending its law of kindness to the lower animals, or something in the nature of northern dogs and northern men which makes dogs among us Anglo Saxons, and all the associations connected with them, so entirely different from what they are in the East? Imagine the effigy of an Oriental saint reposing with its feet on a dog, like that of William the Silent, the heroic Prince of Orange, on the faithful spaniel which rescued his life in the night attack of the Spanish troops, and like so many a sculptured knight of medieval times! The very presence of such an image would, in Oriental eyes, be the greatest desecration an enemy could inflict on a sacred edifice. And in the Bible how exceedingly contemptuous, and how inapplicable to English dogs, are the terms employed in describing canine habits. "They grin like a dog, and go about the city, and grudge if they be not satisfied; " "Without are dogs." What possible resemblance is there between such a description and the grave dignity of a Newfoundland; the sagacious, acute expression of a terrier; the wistful, almost human eyes of our house spaniels? But here at Tyre, as in most Eastern towns, the familiar words came to us with all their true and forcible meaning. The wolfish, hungry, masterless dogs which "go about the cities (of Alexandria, for instance), gathering in packs like jackals, prowling about for offal, and grudging if they be not satisfied; "or the famished outcasts, like our dogs at Tyre, prowling "outside" the city. To these we may apply the highly

unfavourable definitions of Scripture, which every Englishman and Englishwoman must indignantly disclaim on behalf of the loyal, faithful, patient creatures who watch beside our homes like sentinels, and guard our flocks like shepherds, and welcome us with ecstatic joy when we come home again, and sometimes will even die rather than desert a master's grave. *From "Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas," 1862.*

**Verse 14.** Those that repent of their sins when they are in trouble, *mourn like doves*; those whose hearts are hardened when they are in trouble, *make a noise like dogs*. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 16.** *Let them wander up and down*, etc. A beggarly and indigent, and so an unsatisfied and wearisome condition, shall be their lot; the greatest worldly plague that can fall on any—large appetites and no possessions or acquires to satisfy them. *Henry Hammond.*

**Verse 16.** *And grudge if they be not satisfied.* A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 16.** The hunger of a dog is deservedly their plague, of whom a resemblance of that unclean animal's disposition hath been the sin. Reader, be it thy care to avoid such sins, and cultivate a spirit of lively devotion; that, instead of receiving thy portion where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, thou mayest sing to the God of thy mercy for ever. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

**Verse 16.** We must not pass by the contrast with the wretched condition of the wicked, which is indicated by the pronoun *hmh, they*, in Ps 59:15, an *ygaw, but I*, which are in exact antithesis; also the *"evening*, "mentioned above, and the *"morning*, "now occurring for the times of trouble and happiness, and the *dog like noise* of the wicked, and the *singing* with joyful sound of David, to pass by other particulars, likewise give to the diverse states additional difference. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 16.** *Cantabo and exaltabo, I will sing, and I will sing aloud.* Here is *singing* only of God's power; but there is *singing aloud* of his mercy; as if his mercy were more exaltable than his power, and *that* reached the very heavens; *this* unto the clouds. Ps 26:5. *From Humphrey Sydenham's Sermon, entitled, "The Well toned Cymball," 1637.*

**Verse 17.** *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing.* Formerly he had said that the strength of his enemy was with God, and now he asserts the same thing of his own. The expression, however, which admits of two meanings, he elegantly applies to himself in a different sense. God has the strength of the wicked in his hands, to curb and to restrain it, and to show that any power of which they boast is vain and fallacious. His own people, on the other hand, he supports and secures against the possibility of falling, by supplies of strength from himself. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 17.** *Unto thee, O my strength.* In opposition to *the enemy's strength*, Ps 59:9. *Thy power, or strength*—the Hebrew word is the same (Ps 59:16)—is *my strength*. There is an elegant play on

similar sounds in the Hebrew for *I will wait upon thee*, hrmva (Ps 59:9), and "I will sing," hrmza A. R. Faussett.

**Verse 17.** (*first clause*). As on account of *Saul's strength* my *watching* was directed to thee; so now, no account of *thy strength* vouchsafed to me, my *singing* of praises also shall be directed to thee alone. *Martin Geier*.

**Verse 17.** *Strength—Mercy*. He joins these two attributes, "*strength*" and "*mercy*", very well; for take away *strength* from him, and he cannot; remove *mercy*, and he will not, protect; both must go together in any one that will defend; *power*, that he can, *mercy*, that he will; otherwise it is but in vain to hope for help from him David found God to be both, and for both he extols him. *William Nicholson*.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** (*first clause*). Deliver me from temptation, uphold me in temptation, cleanse me from the result of temptation. The world, the flesh, the devil, and chiefly sin, these are our enemies. We cannot escape them of ourselves, but the Lord by providence and grace can rescue us.

**Verse 2.** (*first clause*). From being tempted by their promises, cowed by their threats, corrupted by their teaching, influenced by their example, injured by their slander, hindered in usefulness by their opposition.

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). The subtleties of Satan. Watches for places, times, states, and ways in which to assail us. Errors in doctrine, practice, spirit, set forth to entrap us. "Ye are not ignorant of his devices." Or, the diabolical ambush, discovered by watchfulness, and defeated by faith.

**Verse 4.** The activity of the evil a rebuke for the good.

1. Their activity, *run*.
2. Unanimity—*they run*.
3. Their care—*prepare themselves*.
4. Their readiness—*without my fault*.

**Verse 5.** *O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel*. This title furnishes an admirable topic.

**Verse 9.** The greatness of difficulty a reason for prayer and faith.

**Verse 10.** (*first clause*). The divine forwardness to bless.

**Verse 11.** The continuance of our enemies a salutary ordinance of God for the prevention of an evil to which we are very liable.

**Verse 13** (*last clause*). God as the God of the church, his government as such, known in all human history.

**Verse 16.** The heavenly chorister.

1. His song is sweet in contrast with the revilings of others—*but I*.
2. It treats of subjects which terrify others—*thy power*.

3. It grows louder on tender themes—*thy mercy*.
4. It has its choice seasons—*in the morning*.
5. It is tuned by experience—*for thou hast*.
6. It is all to God's glory—*thy power, thy mercy, thou hast*.

**Verse 17.**

1. *A doctrine*—God is his people's strength.
2. *An appropriation*—"my strength."
3. *A resolution*. The song of gratitude for the past, faith for the present, hope for the future, of bliss for eternity.

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WORKS UPON THE FIFTY-NINTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* Vol. 1., pp. 85-89, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

**Psalm 60**

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

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Here is a lengthy title, but it helps us much to expound the Psalm. *To the Chief Musician upon Shushaneduth*, or the Lily of Testimony. The forty-fifth was on the lilies, and represented the kingly warrior in his beauty going forth to war; here we see him dividing the spoil and bearing testimony to the glory of God. Tunes have strange names apparently, but this results from the fact that we do not know what was in the composer's mind, else they might seem to be touchingly appropriate; perhaps the music or the musical instruments have more to do with this title than the Psalm itself. Yet in war songs, roses and lilies are often mentioned, and one remembers Macaulay's Song of the Hugenots, though perhaps we err in mentioning so carnal a verse—

"Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,  
Charge for the golden lilies now, upon them with the lance."

Michtam of David, to teach. David obeyed the precept to teach the children of Israel; he recorded the Lord's mighty acts that they might be rehearsed in the ears of generations to come. Golden secrets are to be told on the house tops; these things were not done in a corner and ought not to be buried in silence. We ought gladly to learn what inspiration so beautifully teaches. *When he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah*. The combined Aramean tribes sought to overcome Israel, but were signally defeated. *When Joab returned*. He had been engaged in another region, and the enemies of Israel took advantage of his absence, but on his return with Abishai the fortunes of war

were changed. *And smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.* More than this appear to have fallen according to 1Ch 18:12, but this commemorates one memorable part of the conflict. Terrible must have been the battle, but decisive indeed were the results, and the power of the enemy was utterly broken. Well did the Lord deserve a song from his servant.

**DIVISION.** Properly the song may be said to consist of three parts: the complaining verses, Ps 60:1-3; the happy, Ps 60:4-8; the prayerful, Ps 60:9-12. We have divided it as the sense appeared to change.

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** Before the days of Saul, Israel had been brought very low; during his government it had suffered from internal strife, and his reign was closed by an overwhelming disaster at Gibeon. David found himself the possessor of a tottering throne, troubled with the double evil of factions at home, and invasion from abroad. He traced at once the evil to its true source, and began at the fountainhead. His were the politics of piety, which after all are the wisest and most profound. He knew that the displeasure of the Lord had brought calamity upon the nation, and to the removal of that displeasure he set himself by earnest prayer. O God, thou hast cast us off. Thou hast treated us as foul and offensive things, to be put away; as mean and beggarly persons, to be shunned with contempt; as useless dead boughs, to be torn away from the tree, which they disfigure. To be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it. When the divine desertion causes mourning and repentance, it will be but partial and temporary. When a cast off soul sighs for its God it is indeed not cast off at all. Thou has scattered us. David clearly sees the fruits of the divine anger, he traces the flight of Israel's warriors, the breaking of her power, the division in her body politic, to the hand of God. Whoever might be the secondary agent of these disasters, he beholds the Lord's hand as the prime moving cause, and pleads with the Lord concerning the matter. Israel was like a city with a breach made in its wall, because her God was wroth with her. These first two verses, with their depressing confession, must be regarded as greatly enhancing the power of the faith which in the after verses rejoices in better days, through the Lord's gracious return unto his people.

Thou hast been displeased. This is the secret of our miseries. Had we pleased thee, thou wouldst have pleased us; but as we have walked contrary to thee, thou hast walked contrary to us. O turn thyself to us again. Forgive the sin and smile once more. Turn us to thee, turn thou to us. Aforetime thy face was towards thy people, be pleased to look on us again with thy favour and grace. Some read it, "Thou wilt turn to us again," and it makes but slight difference which way we take it, for a true hearted prayer brings a blessing so soon that it is no presumption to consider it already obtained. There was more need for God to turn to his people than for Judah's troops to be brave, or Joab and

the commanders wise. God with us is better than strong battalions; God displeased is more terrible than all the Edomites that ever marched into the valley of salt, or all the devils that ever opposed the church. If the Lord turn to us, what care we for Aramnaharaim or Aramzobah, or death, or hell? but if he withdraw his presence we tremble at the fall of a leaf.

**Verse 2.** *Thou hast made the earth to tremble.* Things were as unsettled as though the solid earth had been made to quake; nothing was stable; the priests had been murdered by Saul, the worst men had been put in office, the military power had been broken by the Philistines, and the civil authority had grown despicable through insurrections and intestine contests. Thou hast broken it. As the earth cracks, and opens itself in rifts during violent earthquakes, so was the kingdom rent with strife and calamity. Heal the breaches thereof. As a house in time of earthquake is shaken, and the walls begin to crack, and gape with threatening fissures, so was it with the kingdom. For it shaketh. It tottered to a fall; if not soon propped up and repaired it would come down in complete ruin. So far gone was Israel, that only God's interposition could preserve it from utter destruction. How often have we seen churches in this condition, and how suitable is the prayer before us, in which the extremity of the need is used as an argument for help. The like may be said of our personal religion, it is sometimes so tried, that like a house shaken by earthquake it is ready to come down with a crash, and none but the Lord himself can repair its breaches, and save us from utter destruction.

**Verse 3.** *Thou hast showed thy people hard things.* Hardships had been heaped upon them, and the psalmist traces these rigorous providences to their fountainhead. Nothing had happened by chance, but all had come by divine design and with a purpose, yet for all that things had gone hard with Israel. The psalmist claims that they were still the Lord's own people, though in the first verse he had said, "thou hast cast us off." The language of complaint is usually confused, and faith in time of trouble ere long contradicts the desponding statements of the flesh. Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Our afflictions have made us like men drunken with some potent and bitter wine; we are in amazement, confusion, delirium; our steps reel, and we stagger as those about to fall. The great physician gives his patients potent potions to purge out their abounding and deep seated diseases. Astonishing evils bring with them astonishing results. The grapes of the vineyard of sin produce a wine which fills the most hardened with anguish when justice compels them to quaff the cup. There is a fire water of anguish of soul which even to the righteous makes a cup of trembling, which causes them to be exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. When grief becomes so habitual as to be our drink, and to take the place of our joys, becoming our only wine, then are we in an evil case indeed.

**Verse 4.** Here the strain takes a turn. The Lord has called back to himself his servants, and commissioned them for his service, presenting them with a standard to be used in his wars. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee. Their afflictions had led them to exhibit holy fear, and then

being fitted for the Lord's favour, he gave them an ensign, which would be both a rallying point for their hosts, a proof that he had sent them to fight, and a guarantee of victory. The bravest men are usually intrusted with the banner, and it is certain that those who fear God must have less fear of man than any others. The Lord has given us the standard of the gospel, let us live to uphold it, and if needful die to defend it. Our right to contend for God, and our reason for expecting success, are found in the fact that the faith has been once committed to the saints, and that by the Lord himself. That it may be displayed because of the truth. Banners are for the breeze, the sun, the battle. Israel might well come forth boldly, for a sacred standard was borne aloft before them. To publish the gospel is a sacred duty, to be ashamed of it a deadly sin. The truth of God was involved in the triumph of David's armies, he had promised them victory; and so in the proclamation of the gospel we need feel no hesitancy, for as surely as God is true he will give success to his own word. For the truth's sake, and because the true God is on our side, let us in these modern days of warfare emulate the warriors of Israel, and unfurl our banners to the breeze with confident joy. Dark signs of present or coming ill must not dishearten us; if the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have given us the gospel; the very fact that he has revealed himself in Christ Jesus involves the certainty of victory.

*Magna est veritas et praevalabit.*

Hard things thou hast upon us laid,  
And made us drink most bitter wine;  
But still thy banner we have displayed,  
And borne aloft thy truth divine.  
Our courage fails not, though the night  
No earthly lamp avails to break,  
For thou wilt soon arise in might,  
And of our captors captives make.

Selah. There is so much in the fact of a banner being given to the hosts of Israel, so much of hope, of duty, of comfort, that a pause is fitly introduced. The sense justifies it, and the more joyful strain of the music necessitates it.

**Verse 5.** *That thy beloved may be delivered.* David was the Lord's beloved, his name signifies "dear, or beloved," and there was in Israel a remnant according to the election of grace, who were the beloved of the Lord; for their sakes the Lord wrought great marvels, and he had an eye to them in all his mighty acts. God's beloved are the inner seed, for whose sake he preserves the entire nation, which acts as a husk to the vital part. This is the main design of providence, *That thy beloved may be delivered*; if it were not for their sakes he would neither give a banner nor send victory to it. Save with thy right hand, and hear me. Save at once, before the prayer is over; the case is desperate unless there be immediate salvation. Tarry not, O Lord, till I have done pleading: save first and hear

afterwards. The salvation must be a right royal and eminent one, such as only the omnipotent hand of God linked with his dexterous wisdom can achieve. Urgent distress puts men upon pressing and bold petitions such as this. We may by faith ask for and expect that our extremity will be God's opportunity; special and memorable deliverances will be wrought out when dire calamities appear to be imminent. Here is one suppliant for many, even as in the case of our Lord's intercession for his saints. He, the Lord's David, pleads for the rest of the beloved, beloved and accepted in him the Chief Beloved; he seeks salvation as though it were for himself, but his eye is ever upon all those who are one with him in the Father's love. When divine interposition is necessary for the rescue of the elect it must occur, for the first and greatest necessity of providence is the honour of God, and the salvation of his chosen. This is fixed fate, the centre of the immutable decree, the inmost thought of the unchangeable Jehovah.

**Verse 6.** *God hath spoken in his holiness.* Faith is never happier than when it can fall back upon the promise of God. She sets this over against all discouraging circumstances; let outward providences say what they will, the voice of a faithful God drowns every sound of tear. God had promised Israel victory, and David the kingdom; the holiness of God secured the fulfilment of his own covenant, and therefore the king spake confidently. The goodly land had been secured to the tribes by the promise made to Abraham, and that divine grant was an abundantly sufficient warrant for the belief that Israel's arms would be successful in battle. Believer make good use of this, and banish doubts while promises remain. I will rejoice, or "I will triumph." Faith regards the promise not as fiction but fact, and therefore drinks in joy from it, and grasps victory by it. "God hath spoken; I will rejoice:" here is a fit motto for every soldier of the cross.

I will divide Shechem. As a victor David would allot the conquered territory to those to whom God had given it by lot. Shechem was an important portion of the country, which as yet had not yielded to his government; but he saw that by Jehovah's help it would be, and indeed was all his own. Faith divides the spoil, she is sure of what God has promised, and enters at once into possession. And mete out the valley of Succoth. As the east so the west of Jordan should be allotted to the proper persons. Enemies should be expelled, and the landmarks of peaceful ownership set up. Where Jacob had pitched his tent, there his rightful heirs should till the soil. When God has spoken, his divine *shall*, our *I will*, becomes no idle boast, but the fit echo of the Lord's decree. Believer, up and take possession of covenant mercies. *Divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.* Let not Canaanitish doubts and legalisms keep thee out of the inheritance of grace. Live up to thy privileges, take the good which God provides thee.

**Verse 7.** *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.* He claims the whole land on account of the promise. Two other great divisions of the country he mentions, evidently delighting to survey the goodly land which the Lord had given him. All things are ours, whether things present or things to come; no mean

portion belongs to the believer, and let him not think meanly of it. No enemy shall withhold from true faith what God has given her, for grace makes her mighty to wrest it from the foe. Life is mine, death is mine, for Christ is mine. Ephraim also is the strength of mine head. All the military power of the valiant tribe was at the command of David, and he praises God for it. God will bow to the accomplishment of his purposes all the valour of men; the church may cry, "the prowess of armies is mine, " God will overrule all their achievements for the progress of his cause. Judah is my lawgiver. There the civil power was concentrated: the king being of that tribe sent forth his laws out of her midst. We know no lawgiver, but the King who came out of Judah. To all the claims of Rome, Or Oxford, or the councils of men, we pay no attention; we are free from all other ecclesiastical rule, but that of Christ: but we yield joyful obedience to him: *Judah is my lawgiver*. Amid distractions it is a great thing to have good and sound legislation, it was a balm for Israel's wounds, it is our joy in the Church of Christ.

**Verse 8.** Having looked at home with satisfaction, the hero king now looks abroad with exultation. Moab, so injurious to me in former years, *is my washpot*. The basin into which the water falls when it is poured from an ewer upon my feet. A mere pot to hold the dirty water after my feet have been washed in it. Once she defiled Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam, the son of Beor; but she shall no longer be able to perpetrate such baseness; she shall be a washpot for those whom she sought to pollute. The wicked as we see in them the evil, the fruit, and the punishment of sin, shall help on the purification of the saints. This is contrary to their will, and to the nature of things, but faith finds honey in the lion, and a washpot in filthy Moab. David treats his foes as but insignificant and inconsiderable; a whole nation he counts but as a footbath for his kingdom. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. As a man when bathing throws his shoes on one side, so would he obtain his dominion over haughty Esau's descendants as easily as a man casts a shoe. Perhaps he would throw his shoe as nowadays men throw their glove, as a challenge to them to dare dispute his sway. He did not need draw a sword to smite his now crippled and utterly despondent adversary, for if he dared revolt he would only need to throw his slipper at him, and he would tremble. Easily are we victors when Omnipotence leads the way. The day shall come when the church shall with equal ease subdue China and Ethiopia to the sceptre of the Son of David. Every believer also may by faith triumph over all difficulties, and reign with him who hath made us kings and priests. "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb, "shall yet be said of all who rest in the power of Jesus.

Philistia, triumph thou because of me. Be so subdued as to rejoice in my victories over my other foes. Or does he mean, I who smote thy champion have at length so subdued thee that thou shalt never be able to rejoice over Israel again; but if thou must needs triumph it must be with me, and not against me; or rather is it a taunting defiance, a piece of irony? O proud Philistia, where are thy vaunts? Where now thy haughty looks, and promised conquests? Thus dare we defy the last enemy, "O

death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" So utterly hopeless is the cause of hell when the Lord comes forth to the battle, that even the weakest daughter of Zion may shake her head at the enemy, and laugh him to scorn. O the glorifying of faith! There is not a grain of vain glory in it, but yet her holy boastings none can hinder. When the Lord speaks the promise, we will not be slow to rejoice and glory in it.

**Verse 9.** As yet the interior fortresses of Edom had not been subdued. Their invading bands had been slain in the valley of salt, and David intended to push his conquests even to Petra the city of the rock, deemed to be impregnable. Who will bring me into the strong city? It was all but inaccessible, and hence the question of David. When we have achieved great success it must be a stimulus to greater efforts, but it must not become a reason for self confidence. We must look to the strong for strength as much at the close of a campaign as at its beginning. Who will lead me into Edom? High up among the stars stood the city of stone, but God could lead his servant up to it. No heights of grace are too elevated for us, the Lord being our leader, but we must beware of high things attempted in self reliance. EXCELSIOR is well enough as a cry, but we must look to the highest of all for guidance. Joab could not bring David into Edom. The veterans of the valley of salt could not force the passage, yet was it to be attempted, and David looked to the Lord for help. Heathen nations are yet to be subdued. The city of the seven hills must yet hear the gospel. Who will give the church the power to accomplish this? The answer is not far to seek.

**Verse 10.** *Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off?* Yes, the chastising God is our only hope. He loves us still. For a small moment doth he forsake, but with great mercy does he gather his people. Strong to smite, he is also strong to save. He who proved to us our need of him by showing us what poor creatures we are without him, will now reveal the glory of his help by conducting great enterprises to a noble issue. And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? The self same God art thou, and to thee faith cleaves. Though thou slay us, we will trust in thee, and look for thy merciful help.

**Verse 11.** *Give us help from trouble.* Help us to overcome the disasters of civil strife and foreign invasion; save us from further incursions from without and division within. Do thou, O Lord, work this deliverance, for vain is the help of man. We have painfully learned the utter impotence of armies, kings, and nations without thine help. Our banners trailed in the mire have proven our weakness without thee, but yonder standard borne aloft before us shall witness to our valour now that thou hast come to our rescue. How sweetly will this verse suit the tried people of God as a frequent ejaculation. We know how true it is.

**Verse 12.** *Through God we shall do valiantly.* From God all power proceeds, and all we do well is done by divine operation; but still we, as soldiers of the great king, are to fight, and to fight valiantly too. Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but rather is it the best excitement for

courageous effort. Helped in the past, we shall also be helped in the future, and being assured of this we resolve to play the man. For he it is that shall tread down our enemies. From him shall the might proceed, to him shall the honour be given. Like straw on the threshing floor beneath the feet of the oxen shall we tread upon our abject foes, but it shall rather be *his* foot which presses them down than ours; his hand shall go out against them so as to put them down and keep them in subjection. In the case of Christians there is much encouragement for a resolve similar to that of the first clause. We shall do valiantly, we will not be ashamed of our colours, afraid of our foes, or fearful of our cause. The Lord is with us, omnipotence sustains us, and we will not hesitate, we dare not be cowards. O that our King, the true David, were come to claim the earth, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** There are some difficulties attendant upon the title of this Psalm, when it is compared with the contents. We naturally expect after such as inscription, joy, congratulation, and praise for victory; but the psalmist breaks out into lamentations and bitter complaints: his strains are, however, changed, when he has proceeded as far as verse three, where he begins to feel confidence, and to employ the language of exultation and triumph. The best means of removing this discrepancy seems to be by remarking, that this Psalm was written after some of the battles of which mention is made in the title, but that the author does not restrict himself to those events without taking a wider range, so as to embrace the afflictive conditions both of Israel and Judah during the latter part of Saul's life, and the former years of David's reign. In the concluding years of Saul, the Philistines obtained a superiority over him, and finally destroyed him with his army. Subsequently to these events the whole land was in a very disturbed and agitated condition, arising out of the contentions between the partisans of Saul's family, and those who were attached to David. The nations which inhabited the regions adjacent to the land of Canaan were at all times inimical to the Jews, and seized every opportunity of attacking and injuring them. But when David had succeeded in uniting the whole nation under his authority, he proceeded to avenge the injuries and insults that had been inflicted upon his countrymen by the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Syrians; and God was pleased to give him signal success in his undertakings. He appears, therefore, to have combined all these transactions, and made them the subject of this Psalm. *William Walford.*

**Title.** *Shushaneduth. The lilies of the testimony*—means, that this Psalm has for its chief subject something very lovely and cheering in the law; namely, the words of promise quoted in the beginning of verse six, according to which the land of Canaan belonged to the Israelites, upon which is thus established the confidence expressed in Ps 60:6-8, with respect to their right of property over the land, and their possession of it. This promise, not to cite many other passages, which occur in the

Five Books of Moses, and even so early as the patriarchs, is contained in Genesis 49, and Deuteronomy 33. It is evident of what value and importance this promise was, and particularly the remembrance of it at this time. *T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual," 1865.*

**Title.** The only other *eduth* or "*testimony*" in the Psalter, Psalm 80, makes mention by name of the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and is a witness against those tribes for forsaking the Shepherd of Israel who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. *Joseph Francis Thrupp, M.A., in "An Introduction to the Study and Use of the Psalms," 1860.*

**Title.** *Aramnaharaim.* The name *Aram* corresponds to *Syria* in its widest and vaguest sense, and is joined with other names to designate particular parts of that large country. It even includes Mesopotamia, which is a term of physical rather than political geography, and denotes the space between the Tigris and Euphrates, corresponding to *Aram Naharaim*, or *Syria of the Two Rivers*, in the verse before us. The king of this country was tributary to the king of Aram Zobah, as appears from the account of David's second Aramean war (2Sa 10:16,19). *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Title.** *When he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah.* An insult offered to David's ambassadors by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, led to a serious war. Hanun obtained mercenaries from Syria to reinforce his army, Joab and Abishai his brother, David's generals, gave them battle. Joab, opposed to the Syrians, gained the first success, and the Ammonites, seeing their allies routed, took to flight into their town. But this defeat provoked a great coalition, embracing all the people between the Jordan and the Euphrates. David, however, fearlessly marched against them at the head of his army; he vanquished all his enemies, and made himself master of the small Aramaean kingdoms of Damascus, Zobah, and Hamath, and subjugated the Eastern Idumaeans, who met their final defeat in the Valley of Salt. *Francois Lenormant and E. Chevallier, in "A Manual of the Ancient History of the East," 1869.*

**Title.** *Joab returned and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand,* compared with 2Sa 8:13, "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, being eighteen thousand men," and 1Ch 18:12, where this very service was performed by *Abishai*. Answer. It is one thing to attribute the victory for the honour of the king that was the cause. But the mentioning of these chief generals, by whom the service was performed, is another. David, under God, must have the honour of the work, for the increase of his name, being set for the typing out of Christ, who must have all the glory of the day, whatever conquest he gets by instruments of that service here, who likewise are typed out in David's worthies, of whom Joab and Abishai were chief. By these he obtained that great victory over Hadadezer. In returning from which service Joab found his brother Abishai engaged *in the valley of salt* against eighteen thousand Edomites or Syrians (all one), whose valour the Almighty looked on, as he attributes the whole slaughter to him, because first attempting it. Joab, it seems, took this in his return from the former slaughter, and fell in for the assistance of his

brother Abishai (for that was their usual course: though they divided their armies, they did not divide their hearts). But if the enemies were too strong, one would help the other. 1Ch 19:12. And of this eighteen thousand attributed to David and Abishai before, Joab slew twelve thousand of them; the memory of which service is here embalmed with a Psalm; first showing the extremes they were in, doubtful at first they should not get the victory. Secondly, applying it to the kingdom of Christ. Lastly, ascribing all the honour of the conquest to God; saying, through God this valiant service was done; it was he that trod down our enemies; and will do (last verse). *William Streat, in "The Dividing of the Hoof," 1654.*

**Title.** *The Valley of Salt.* The ridge of Usdum exhibits more distinctly its peculiar formation; *the main body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock salt...* We could at first hardly believe our eyes, until we had several times approached the precipices, and broken off pieces to satisfy ourselves, both by the touch and taste. The salt, where thus exposed, is everywhere more or less furrowed by the rains. As we advanced, large lumps and masses broken off from above, lay like rocks along the shore, or were fallen down as *debris*. The very stones beneath our feet were wholly salt... The position of this mountain at the south end of the sea, enables us also to ascertain the place of *The Valley of Salt* mentioned in Scripture, where the Hebrews under David, and again under Amaziah, gained decisive victories over Edom. This valley could have been no other than the Ghor south of the Dead Sea, adjacent to the mountain of salt; it separates indeed the ancient territories of Judah and Edom. *Edward Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine," 1867.*

**Title.** The historic record mentions *eighteen thousand* slain, and here but *twelve thousand*. The greater of course includes the less. The discrepancy may be explained by supposing that the title contains the numbers slain by one division of the army, or that the *twelve thousand* were slain in the battle, and the residue in the flight. Or an error may have crept into the text. Every scholar admits that there is sometimes serious difficulty in settling the numbers of the Old Testament. In this place Calvin has *two and twenty thousand*, the common version *twelve thousand*, while the original is *two ten thousand*, which taken in one way would mean *twenty thousand, i.e., two tens of thousands*. Hammond refers the number slain to different battles, and so avoids the difficulty. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 1.** *O God, thou hast cast us off.* The word here used means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything as if it were foul or rancid; to repel, to spurn, to cast away. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 2.** *Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.* They pray that this may be done with the utmost speed, because there was a danger in delay, for the kingdom was already pressed down with a heavy calamity, and on the brink of ruin, which is signified by the word *hjm* whose origin is in a very strong and tremulous inclination to one side, properly from the application of a *lever*, and is applied to

those who are leaning so far to one side that they are just on the point of falling; figuratively, therefore, it expresses a *most perilous condition*, in which one is on the edge of destruction. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 2.** *Heal the breaches thereof.* Even Israel is subject to *breaches*. So it was with the literal typical Israel, David's kingdom; so it may be with spiritual mystical Israel, the kingdom of Christ, the church of God upon earth. There are *breaches* from *without*, and *breaches* from *within*. I will invert the order. From *without*, by open *persecution*; from *within*, by intestine and homebred *divisions*. Of both these the church of God in all ages hath had sufficient experience. Look we upon the *primitive* times, during the infancy of the church, however the *soundest* and most entire church that ever was, yet how was it *broken!* Broken, as by foreign persecutions, so by homebred divisions. Both these ways was the church during the apostles' time broken, distressed by enemies from without who persecuted it. *John Brinsley (1600-1665), in "The Healing of Israel's Breaches."*

**Verse 2.** *It shaketh.* That is, presaging nothing but *ruin* and *downfall*, unless it be speedily underpropped, and *the breaches thereof* made up and *healed*. Thus did David look upon Israel's disease, and hereupon it was that he was so deeply affected with it, so earnestly desiring the cure of it. The reference, as interpreters conceive, is to those *homebred divisions*, those civil wars betwixt the two houses of Saul and David, after the death of Saul: then did the *"earth,* "the land, that land of Israel (as the Chaldee explains it), *quake and tremble,* being *broken, riven* (as the word in the original signifieth): even as the earth sometimes by earthquakes is riven, and torn asunder with prodigious chasms, openings, or gapings: so was that kingdom divided in those civil commotions, the nobles and commons taking parts and siding, some with David, some with Ishbosheth. *John Brinsley.*

**Verse 3.** *Thou hast showed thy people hard things.* God will be sure to plough his own ground, whatsoever becometh of the waste; and to weed his own garden, though the rest of the world should be let alone to grow wild. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 3.** *Thou hast given us to drink infatuation, or bewilderment, as men drink wine.* So Hupfeld explains the constructions, referring to Ps 80:5, "Thou hast made them feed upon weeping like bread; "1Ki 22:27, "Feed him with affliction as bread, and with affliction as water" uxl mymw; Isa 30:20. But the apposition is capable of being explained in another way, for the second noun may in fact be a predicate further defining the first: "Thou hast given us wine to drink which is (not wine, but) bewilderment." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 3.** *The wine of astonishment. "Intoxicating wine."* Hebrew, "Wine of staggering, "that is, which causeth staggering, or, in other words, intoxicating. Some render, "wine of stupor, "or stupefying. Symmachus, "wine of agitation, "and this sense I have adopted which is also that of the Syriac. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

**Verse 4.** *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.* Perhaps the delivery of a *banner* was

anciently esteemed an obligation to protect, and that the psalmist might consider it in this light, when, upon a victory over the Syrians and Edomites, after the public affairs of Israel had been in a bad state, he says, *Thou hast shewed thy people hard things, etc. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.* Though thou didst for a time give up thine Israel into the hands of their enemies, thou hast now given them an assurance of thy having received them under thy protection. *Thomas Harmer (1715-1788), in "Observations on Divers Passages of Scripture."*

**Verse 4.** *Thou hast given a banner, etc.* Thou hast given us by the recent victory, after our prostrate condition, a banner of triumph to *lift up* (so the Hebrew), because of thy faithfulness to thy promise. *Truth* here answers to God's *holiness* (Ps 60:6). So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The *banner* is a pledge of safety, and a rallying point to those who fight under it. *A. R. Faussett.*

**Verse 4.** *Thou hast given a banner, etc.* The psalmist compares the *salvation* which the Lord bestows upon his people to a highly excellent *banner*, which serves as a signal, to one lying prostrate in his misery, to rise up, with an allusion perhaps to Nu 21:8. "And the Lord said to Moses, Make thee a serpent, and set it upon a *standard pole*; and it happened that every one who was bitten, and looked at it, lived." At any rate, that passage in which the serpent is a symbol of the healing power of God, may serve to illustrate the passage before us. Compare *heal its breaches.* *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 4.** *A banner, which is a sign or instrument:*

1. Of union. This people, who were lately divided and under several banners, thou hast now gathered together and united under one banner; to wit, under my government.
2. Of battle. Thou hast given us an army and power to oppose our enemies. We had our banner to set against theirs.
3. Of triumph. We have not lost our banner but gained theirs, and brought it away in triumph. Compare Ps 20:5. *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 6.** *God hath spoken in his holiness.* That is, by Samuel he hath promised, as he is an holy God, and true of his word, that I should be king of all Israel, and now he hath performed it. (2 Samuel 5.) Yet Calvin speaks of it as not yet performed; but the course of the history makes it plain that David was now king over the parts of which he here speaketh. *I will divide Shechem*, as subjects to me as Joshua having the land under him, divided it amongst his people: so David being king over all the parts of the land, divides to his followers such portions as belonged unto them by inheritance, from which happily some of them had been expelled by the time of Ishbosheth his reign; or some families in the time of those wars might be utterly wasted away, and so the king having free power to dispose of their lands, might give them amongst his men, and take part to himself. *John Mayer.*

**Verse 6.** *God hath spoken in his holiness.* That is, he hath given out his word from heaven, the habitation of his holiness and of his glory; or, he hath spoken it certainly, there is nothing but holiness

in his word (and that is the strength of words). David having received this word stands assured, that as Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah would willingly submit to him and yield obedience; so, also, that Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who were his professed enemies, should be subdued to him. He expected to conquer and triumph over them, to put them to the basest offices, as his vassals, because God had decreed and spoken it in his holiness. God hath spoken the word, saith he, therefore it shall be done, yea, it is done; and therefore David cried, *All's mine, Gilead in mine, Manasseh is mine, Moab and Edom are mine*, as soon as God had spoken the word. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 6.** *I will divide Shechem.* It is as much as if he should say, I will not look to have my share measured out by others, but I will divide it, and measure myself, and will be the right owner and possessor thereof. *Thomas Wilcocks*.

**Verse 6.** *I will divide Shechem, etc.* Of *Shechem* and the *Valley of Succoth, or booths*, so called from Jacob's making *booths*, and *feeding his cattle* there. (See Ge 33:17-18.) By these are meant Samaria; and *David's dividing or meting* them out, is a phrase to express his *dominion* over them, in being part of the *regal* power to *distribute* his province into cities and regions, and place judges and magistrates over them. To these the addition of *Gilead* (which contained the whole region of *Bashan*, etc., on the *other side of Jordan*), and then the mention of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, are designed, as by so many parts, to denote the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes; and their being *his*, and *the strength of his head*, notes him to be the *Lord* over them, and to make use of their strength in his wars, for the defending or enlarging his dominions. And then *Judah yqqwxm is my lawgiver*; as it refers to Jacob's prophecy of the *sceptre and lawgiver not departing from Judah*, denoting that to be the *royal* tribe; so by it is signified the *kingdom of Judah* (under which *Benjamin* is comprehended), that David is possessed of that also. *Henry Hammond*.

**Verse 6.** *Succoth.* If the preceding views are correct, we may rest in the result, that the present Sâkût represents the name and site of the ancient Succoth...We passed obliquely along the northern slope of the same broad swell, where the ground was covered only by a thick crop of thistles. On our right was a region of lower ground to which we gradually descended; full of grass, wild oats, and thistles, with an occasional thornbush. The soil was like that of an Ohio bottom. The grass, intermingled with tall daisies, and the wild oats reached to the horses backs; while the thistles sometimes overtopped the rider's heads. All was now dry; and in some places it was difficult to make our way through the exuberant growth. At last we came to the cause of this fertility, a fine brook winding along the bottom. We crossed it, and passed up again obliquely over another like swell, covered as before only with thistles. Here was an ancient oil vat, very large and of a single stone; it was evidently brought hither, and indicates the former growth of the olive in these parts. We struck the same stream again at its source, called Ain el Beida, a large and fine fountain, surrounded with gardens of cucumbers, and

watering an extensive tract. We were here on the edge of the higher portion of the Ghôr, where low ridges and swells project out from the foot of the western mountains, and form a rolling plain or plateau, which is well watered, arable and very extensively cultivated for wheat. The tract further east, which we had now crossed, may be said to extend to the high bank of the lower Jordan valley. It is less elevated, is more generally level, though crossed by low swells between the water courses, and has little tillage. The inhabitants of Tûbâs are divided into three hostile parties; and they carry their divisions into their agriculture in the Ghôr. One party sows at Ain el Beida, where we now were; another around Ain Makhûz, more in the north; and the third at Ridghah, Sâkût, and further south. The people of Teyâsîr also sow on the south of Mâlih; the water of which is used for irrigation. The whole tract north of Wady Mâlih was said to be farmed from the government by one of the Sheiks of the Jenâr family, who live at Jeba and in its neighbourhood. By him it is again let to the different villages. *Robinson's "Biblical Researches in Palestine."*

**Verses 6-7.** The chief and principal places where the seditious party had their residence and abode, were those which the psalmist mentions in the sixth and seventh verses, namely, *Shechem*, a city in the tribe of Ephraim; *Succoth*, a city in the tribe of Gad; *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan beyond Jordan. These were some of the chief places, which sided with Ishbosheth whilst he lived, as you may see, 2 Samuel 2; and, as it seemeth, they still cleaved to the house of Saul after he was dead, not acknowledging David for their king. *John Brinsley.*

**Verse 7.** *Gilead is mine and Manasseh is mine.* That is to say, I will possess myself of them and rule over them; not as a *conqueror* over *slaves*, but as a lord over *subjects*, as a father over children, owning and acknowledging them as *mine*. They are my inheritance, and shall be my people, my subjects. *John Brinsley.*

**Verse 7.** *Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.* The strong and warlike tribe of Ephraim being to the state what the helmet is to the warriors in battle; or, perhaps the allusion is to De 33:17: "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the nations." *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 7.** *Judah is (or shall be) my lawgiver*, i.e., all his subjects should be brought under one *Head*, one governor, who should give them laws, according to which they should be ordered or governed, which power and authority belonged to the tribe of *Judah*, according to that prophecy of Jacob (Ge 49:10), to which the psalmist here alludes. No way, no means to bring the people unto unity, to bring them into one *body*, but by bringing them under on *head*, one *law giver*, by whose laws they may be regulated and governed. Now in the church, and in matters of religion, this one *Head* is *Christ*, even that *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, as he is called (Re 5:5). He is the *Law giver* of his church, and let him so be. This will be found one, aye, and the only means to breed an holy and religious unity, and bring home straying, wandering sheep. *John Brinsley.*

**Verse 7.** No government could stand which was not resident in Judah. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 8.** *Moab is my washpot.* Implying that Moab should be reduced to slavery, it being the business of a slave to present the hand washing basin to his master. With the Greeks, *plunein tina*, to wash down any one, was a slang term, signifying to ridicule, abuse, or beat; hence we have the word *washpot* applied to the subject of such treatment. "You do not appear to be in your right senses, who make a washpot of me in the presence of many men." *Aristophanes.* *Thomas S. Millington, in "The Testimony of the Heathen to the Truths of Holy Writ,"* 1863.

**Verse 8.** (*second clause*). When, keeping in view the idea of washing the feet, a person throws his shoes, which he has taken off, to any one to be taken away or to be cleaned—*kylvh* with *le* and also with *la*, 1Ki 19:19, is "*to throw to any one*"—the individual to whom it belongs to perform such an office must be a slave of the lowest kind. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 8.** *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe*, which notes either contempt of them, as if he had said, O look upon them as worthy only to scrape and make clean my shoes. Or secondly, conquest over them—I will walk through Edom and subdue it. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 8.** *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.* By extension, immission, or projection of the shoe, either upon the necks of people, or over their countries, is meant nothing else but to overcome, subdue, bring under power, possess, and subject to vileness such men and such countries. The very vulgar acceptance of the word *possession*, in the grammatical sense, imports as much; for the etymology of *possessio* is no more but *pedum positio*. This manner of speaking hath also allusion to the positive law recorded in De 25:6-10; for the letter of the law is, that is the kinsman would not marry the brother's widow and raise up seed unto his brother; the widow loosing his shoe, and spitting in his face, he lost the claim and interest of such possessions as belonged to the woman in right of her husband. And the house of such a man was called *domus discalceati*, that is to say, "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed." The practice also of this law we find recorded in the book of Ruth, in the case of Elimelech's land, between Boaz and the kinsman, about the widow Ruth, who had her interest by right of her husband in the said land. Moreover, the frequent use of this phrase meeting us very often in the book of God, makes this to be the meaning of the words, as clear as the day. This king elsewhere singing his trophies, saith, "They are fallen under my feet." "Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon." But the people must "not meddle with Mount Seir; for God would not give them thereof so much as a foot's breadth; "yet ever the place whereon the soles of their feet should tread, from the wilderness of Lebanon and from the river Euphrates unto the utmost sea, should be theirs. Ps 18:38 De 1:36 2:5. *William Loe, in "A Sermon before the King at Theobalds, "entitled, "The King's Shoe, made and ordained to trample on, and to tread down enemies,"* 1623.

**Verse 8.** *Over Edom will I cast out my shoe.* Turnus, having slain Palias,—"*Bestrode the corpse, and*

pressed it with his foot." *Virgil*.

**Verse 8.** Of the Philistines he says, *Over Philistia it is mine to boast*; for so I would translate, and not, as is usual, *Philistia, triumph thou over me*, which does not yield a consistent meaning. *Hermann Venema*.

**Verse 8.** (*last clause*). Let not our adversaries triumph over our *breaches*. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." Or, if they will, let them triumph: *Triumph thou, O Philistia, because of me, or over me*. *John Brinsley*.

**Verses 8-10.** Moab in the East, Edom in the South, and Philistia in the West (the North is not mentioned, because the banner of David had already been victorious there.) *Augustus F. Tholuck*.

**Verse 11.** *For vain is the help of man*. As they had lately experimented in *Saul*, a king of their own choosing, but not able to save them from those proud Philistines. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 11.** So long as sight and reason find footing in matters, there is no place for faith and hope; the abundance of human helps puts not grace to proof, but the strength of faith is in the absence of them all. A man is stronger when he goeth on his feet alone, than when he standeth by a grip in his infancy, or leaneth on a staff in his old age: the two feet of faith and hope serve us best when we are fixed on the Rock of Sion alone. *William Struther*.

**Verse 12.** *Through God we shall do*, etc. In war these two must be joined, and indeed in all actions: *HE, we; God and man*.

1. "We shall do valiantly, "for God helps not remiss, or cowardly, or negligent men.

2. And yet, that being done, the work is *his*: "He shall tread down; "the blow and the overthrow are not to be attributed to *us*, but to *him*. *Adam Clarke*.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** Prayer of a church in low condition.

1. *Complaint*.

(a) Left of God's Spirit.

(b) Scattered.

2. *Cause*. Something displeasing to God. Neglect or actual sin; a subject for self examination.

3. *Cure*. The Lord's return to us and ours to him. In our version it is a prayer; in the Septuagint an expression of faith—"Thou wilt return."

**Verse 2.** The perturbation, the prayer, the plea. *G. R.*

**Verse 3.** That God does afflict his people severely, and that he has good reason for the same.

**Verse 3.** *The wine of astonishment*. A purgative, a tonic. Astonishing sin followed by astonishing chastisements, discoveries of corruption, of the spirituality of the law, of the terrors of divine wrath, and by astonishing depressions, temptations, and conflicts.

**Verse 4.** The banner of the gospel.

1. Why a banner? A rallying point, meant to fight under, etc.
2. By whom given. *Thou*.
3. To whom. *To them that fear thee*.
4. What is to be done with it. *To be displayed*.
5. For what cause. *Because of the truth*. Truth promotes truth.

**Verse 5.** The deliverance of the elect needs a saving God, a mighty God (*right hand*), and a prayer hearing God.

**Verse 5.** (*last clause*). *Save... and hear*. The remarkable order of these words suggests that—

1. In the purpose of God.
2. In the first works of grace.
3. Often under trial.
4. And specially in fierce temptations, Gods saving precedes man's praying.

**Verse 6.** God's holy promise, ground for present joy, and for boldly taking possession of the promised good.

**Verse 7.** *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine*. How, and in what respect this world is the Christian's.

**Verse 7.** *Judah is my lawgiver*. The believer owning no law but that which comes from Christ.

**Verse 8.** *Moab is my washpot*. How we may make sinners subservient to our sanctification. We are warned by their sin, and punishment, etc. See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 983, "Moab is my washpot."

**Verse 9.** The soul winner's question.

1. The object of attack; the strong city of man's heart, barricaded by depravity, ignorance, prejudice, custom, etc.
2. Our main design. To penetrate, to reach the citadel for Jesus.
3. Our great enquiry. Eloquence, learning, wit, none of these can force the gate, but there is One who can.

**Verse 12.** Divine operation a reason for human activity.