

《The Treasury of David (Vol. 8)(C.H. Spurgeon)》

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Psalm 119 (Verse 1 to Verse 24)

Psalm 106

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GENERAL REMARKS. This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah—"Praise ye the Lord." The space between these two descriptions of praise is filled up with the mournful details of Israel's sin, and the extraordinary patience of God; and truly we do well to bless the Lord both at the beginning and the end of our meditations when sin and grace are the themes. This sacred song is occupied with the historical part of the Old Testament, and is one of many which are thus composed: surely this should be a sufficient rebuke to those who speak slightingly of the historical Scriptures; it in becomes a child of God to think lightly of that which the Holy Spirit so frequently uses for our instruction. What other Scriptures had David beside those very histories which are so depreciated, and yet he esteemed them beyond his necessary food, and made them his songs in the house of his pilgrimage?

Israel's history is here written with the view of showing human sin, even as the preceding psalm was composed to magnify divine goodness. It is, in fact, a national confession, and includes an acknowledgment of the transgressions of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan, with devout petitions for forgiveness such as rendered the Psalm suitable for use in all succeeding generations, and especially in times of national captivity. It was probably written by David,—at any rate its first and last two verses are to be found in that sacred song which David delivered to Asaph

when he brought up the ark of the Lord (1Ch 16:34,35,36). While we are studying this holy Psalm, let us all along see ourselves in the Lord's ancient people, and bemoan our own provocations of the Most High, at the same time admiring his infinite patience, and adoring him because of it. May the Holy Spirit sanctify it to the promotion of humility and gratitude.

DIVISION. Praise and prayer are blended in the introduction (Ps 106:1-5). Then comes the story of the nation's sins, which continues till the closing prayer and praise of the last two verses. While making confession the Psalmist acknowledges the sins committed in Egypt and at the Red Sea (Ps 106:6-12), the lusting in the wilderness (Ps 106:13-15), the envying of Moses and Aaron (Ps 106:16-18), the worship of the golden calf (Ps 106:19-23) the despising of the promised land (Ps 106:24-27), the iniquity of Baal Peor (Ps 106:28-30), and the waters of Meribah (Ps 106:28-33). Then he owns the failure of Israel when settled in Canaan, and mentions their consequent chastisement (Ps 106:34-44), together with the quick compassion which came to their relief when they were brought low (Ps 106:44-46). The closing prayer and doxology fill up the remaining verses.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Praise ye the Lord.* Hallelujah. Praise ye Jah. This song is for the assembled people, and they are all exhorted to join in praise to Jehovah. It is not meet for a few to praise and the rest to be silent; but all should join. If David were present in churches where quartets and choirs carry on all the singing, he would turn to the congregation and say, "Praise ye the Lord." Our meditation dwells upon human sin; but on all occasions and in all occupations it is seasonable and profitable to praise the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good. To us needy creatures the goodness of God is the first attribute which excites praise, and that praise takes the form of gratitude. We praise the Lord truly when we give him thanks for what we have received from his goodness. Let us never be slow to return unto the Lord our praise; to thank him is the least we can do—let us not neglect it. For his mercy endureth for ever. Goodness towards sinners assumes the form of mercy, mercy should therefore be a leading note in our song. Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful. From age to age the Lord deals graciously with his church, and to every individual in it he is constant and faithful in his grace, even for evermore. In a short space we have here two arguments for praise, "for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever," and these two arguments are themselves praises. The very best language of adoration is that which adoringly in the plainest words sets forth the simple truth with regard to our great Lord. No rhetorical flourishes or poetical hyperboles are needed, the bare facts are sublime poetry, and the narration of them with reverence is the essence of adoration. This first verse is the text of all that which follows; we are now to see how from generation to generation the mercy of God endured to his chosen people.

Verse 2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? What tongue of men or angels can duly*

describe the great displays of divine power? They are unutterable. Even those who saw them could not fully tell them. Who can shew forth all his praise? To declare his works is the same thing as to praise him, for his own doings are his best commendation. We cannot say one tenth so much for him as his own character and acts have already done? Those who praise the Lord have an infinite subject, a subject which will not be exhausted throughout eternity by the most enlarged intellects, nay, nor by the whole multitude of the redeemed, though no man can number them. The questions of this verse never can be answered; their challenge can never be accepted, except in that humble measure which can be reached by a holy life and a grateful heart.

Verse 3. Since the Lord is so good and so worthy to be praised, it must be for our happiness to obey him. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness *at all times*. Multiplied are the blessings which must descend upon the whole company of the keepers of the way of justice, and especially upon that one rare man who at all times follows that which is right. Holiness is happiness. The way of right is the way of peace. Yet men leave this road, and prefer the paths of the destroyer. Hence the story which follows is in sad contrast with the happiness here depicted, because the way of Israel was not that of judgment and righteousness, but that of folly and iniquity. The Psalmist, while contemplating the perfections of God, was impressed with the feeling that the servants of such a being must be happy, and when he looked around and saw how the tribes of old prospered when they obeyed, and suffered when they sinned, he was still more fully assured of the truth of his conclusion. O could we but be free of sin we should be rid of sorrow! We would not only be just, but "keep judgment"; we would not be content with occasionally acting rightly, but would "do justice at all times."

Verse 4. *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people.* Insignificant as I am, do not forget me. Think of me with kindness, even as thou thinkest of thine own elect. I cannot ask more, nor would I seek less. Treat me as the least of thy saints are treated and I am content. It should be enough for us if we fare as the rest of the family. If even Balaam desired no more than to die the death of the righteous, we may be well content both to live as they live, and die as they die. This feeling would prevent our wishing to escape trial, persecution, and chastisement; these have fallen to the lot of saints, and why should we escape them

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?
While others fought to will the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas."

At the same time we pray to have their sweets as well as their bitters. If the Lord smiled upon their souls we cannot rest unless he smiles upon us also. We would dwell where they dwell, rejoice as they rejoice, sorrow as they sorrow, and in all things be for ever one with them in the favour of the

Lord. The sentence before us is a sweet prayer, at once humble and aspiring, submissive and expansive; it might be used by a dying thief or a living apostle; let us use it now. O visit me with thy salvation. Bring it home to me. Come to my house and to my heart, and give me the salvation which thou hast prepared, and art alone able to bestow. We sometimes hear of a man's dying by the visitation of God, but here is one who knows that he can only live by the visitation of God. Jesus said of Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house, "and that was the case because he himself had come there. There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and he must visit us with it or we shall never obtain it. We are too sick to visit our Great Physician, and therefore he visits us. O that our great Bishop would hold a visitation of all the churches, and bestow his benediction upon all his flock. Sometimes the second prayer of this verse seems to be too great for us, for we feel that we are not worthy that the Lord should come under our roof. Visit me, Lord? Can it be? Dare I ask for it? And yet I must, for thou alone canst: bring me salvation: therefore, Lord, I entreat thee come unto me, and abide with me for ever.

Verse 5. *That I may see the good of thy chosen.* His desire for the divine favour was excited by the hope that he might participate in all the good things which flow to the people of God through their election. The Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen us in him, and in these precious gifts we desire to share through the saving visitation of the Lord. No other good do we wish to see, perceive, and apprehend, but that which is the peculiar treasure of the saints. That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation. The psalmist, having sought his portion in the good of the chosen, now also begs to be a partaker in their joy for of all the nations under heaven the Lord's true people are the happiest. That I may glory with thine inheritance. He would have a part and lot in their honour as well as their joy. He was willing to find glory where saints find it, namely, in being reproached for truth's sake. To serve the Lord and endure shame for his sake is the glory of the saints below: Lord, let me rejoice to bear my part therein. To be with God above, for ever blessed in Christ Jesus, is the glory of saints above: O Lord, be pleased to allot me a place there also. These introductory thanksgivings and supplications, though they occur first in the psalm, are doubtless the result of the contemplations which succeed them, and may be viewed not only as the preface, but also as the moral of the whole sacred song.

Verse 6. *We have sinned with our fathers.* Here begins a long and particular confession. Confession of sin is the readiest way to secure an answer to the prayer of verse 4; God visits with his salvation the soul which acknowledges its need of a Saviour. Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires. Moreover, Israel was but one nation in all time, and the confession which follows sets forth the national rather than the personal sin of the Lord's people. They enjoyed national privileges, and therefore they shared in national guilt. We have committed

iniquity, we have done wickedly. Thus is the confession repeated three times, in token of the sincerity and heartiness of it. Sins of omission, commission, and rebellion we ought to acknowledge under distinct heads, that we may show a due sense of the number and heinousness of our offences.

Verse 7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* The Israelites saw the miraculous plagues and ignorantly wondered at them: their design of love, their deep moral and spiritual lessons, and their revelation of the divine power and justice they were unable to perceive. A long sojourn among idolaters had blunted the perceptions of the chosen family, and cruel slavery had ground them down into mental sluggishness. Alas, how many of God's wonders are not understood, or misunderstood by us still. We fear the sons are no great improvement upon the sires. We inherit from our fathers much sin and little wisdom; they could only leave us what they themselves possessed. We see from this verse that a want of understanding is no excuse for sin, but is itself one count in the indictment against Israel. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies. The sin of the understanding leads on to the sin of the memory. What is not understood will soon be forgotten. Men feel little interest in preserving husks; if they know nothing of the inner kernel they will take no care of the shells. It was an aggravation of Israel's sin that when God's mercies were so numerous they yet were able to forget them all. Surely some out of such a multitude of benefits ought to have remained engraven upon their hearts; but if grace does not give us understanding, nature will soon east out the memory of God's great goodness. But provoked him at the sea, even; at the Red sea. To fall out at starting was a bad sign. Those who did not begin well can hardly be expected to end well. Israel is not quite out of Egypt, and yet she begins to provoke the Lord by doubting his power to deliver, and questioning his faithfulness to his promise. The sea was only called Red, but their sins were scarlet in reality; it was known as the "sea of weeds," but far worse weeds grew in their hearts.

Verse 8. *Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.* When he could find no other reason for his mercy he found it in his own glory, and seized the opportunity to display his power. If Israel does not deserve to be saved, yet Pharaoh's pride needs to be crushed, and therefore Israel shall be delivered. The Lord very jealously guards his own name and honour. It shall never be said of him that he cannot or will not save his people, or that he cannot abate the haughtiness of his defiant foes. This respect unto his own honour ever leads him to deeds of mercy, and hence we may well rejoice that he is a jealous God.

Verse 9. *He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up.* A word did it. The sea heard his voice and obeyed. How many rebukes of God are lost upon us! Are we not more unmanageable than the ocean? God did, as it were, chide the sea, and say, "Wherefore dost thou stop the way of my people? Their path to Canaan lies through thy channel, how dare you hinder them?" The sea perceived its Master and his seed royal, and made way at once. So he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. As if it had been the dry floor of the desert the tribes passed over the bottom of the gulf;

nor was their passage venturesome, for HE bade them go; nor dangerous, for He led them. We also have under divine protection passed through many trials and afflictions, and with the Lord as our guide we have experienced no fear and endured no perils. We have been led through the deeps as through the wilderness.

Verse 10. *And he saved them from the hand of them that hated them.* Pharaoh was drowned, and the power of Egypt so crippled that throughout the forty years' wanderings of Israel they were never threatened by their old masters. And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. This was a redemption by power, and one of the most instructive types of the redemption of the Lord's people from sin and hell by the power which worketh in them.

Verse 11. *And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.* The Lord does nothing by halves. What he begins he carries through to the end. This, again, made Israel's sin the greater, because they saw the thoroughness of the divine justice, and the perfection of the divine faithfulness. In the covering of their enemies we have a type of the pardon of our sins; they are sunk as in the sea, never to rise again; and, blessed be the Lord, there is "not one of them left."—Not one sin of thought, or word, or deed, the blood of Jesus has covered all. "I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea."

Verse 12. *Then believed they his words.* That is to say, they believed the promise when they saw it fulfilled, but not till then. This is mentioned, not to their credit, but to their shame. Those who do not believe the Lord's word till they see it performed are not believers at all. Who would not believe when the fact stares them in the face? The Egyptians would have done as much as this. They sang his praise. How could they do otherwise? Their song was very excellent, and is the type of the song of heaven; but sweet as it was, it was quite as short, and when it was ended they fell to murmuring. "They sang his praise, "but "they soon forgot his works." Between Israel singing and Israel sinning there was scarce a step. Their song was good while it lasted, but it was no sooner begun than over.

Verse 13. *They soon forgot his works.* They seemed in a hurry to get the Lord's mercies out of their memories; they hastened to be ungrateful. They waited not for his counsel, neither waiting for the word of command or promise; eager to have their own way, and prone to trust in themselves. This is a common fault in the Lord's family to this day; we are long in learning to wait for the Lord, and upon the Lord. With him is counsel and strength, but we are vain enough to look for these to ourselves, and therefore we grievously err.

Verse 14. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.* Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long, but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. For a meal

of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey. What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly, And tempted God in the desert. In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon him and were everyday fed by his direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke their God. They would have him change the plans of his wisdom, supply their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their wicked unbelief: these things the Lord would not do, but they went as far as they could in trying to induce him to do so. They failed not in their wicked attempt because of any goodness in themselves, but because God "cannot be tempted, "—temptation has no power over him, he yields not to man's threats or promises.

Verse 15. *And he gave them their request.* Prayer may be answered in anger and denied in love. That God gives a man his desire is no proof that he is the object of divine favour, everything depends upon what that desire is. But sent leanness into their soul. Ah, that "but!" It embittered all. The meat was poison to them when it came without a blessing; whatever it might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the soul lean. If we must know scantiness, may God grant it may not be scantiness of soul: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner. To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase; but to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer! The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. We fret and fume till we have our desire, and then we have to fret still note because the attainment of it ends in bitter disappointment.

Verse 16. *They envied Moses also in the camp.* Though to him as the Lord's chosen instrument they owed everything, they grudged him the authority which it was needful that he should exercise for their good. Some were more openly rebellious than others, and became leaders of the mutiny, but a spirit of dissatisfaction was general, and therefore the whole nation is charged with it. Who can hope to escape envy when the meekest of men was subject to it? How unreasonable was this envy, for Moses was the one man in all the camp who laboured hardest and had most to bear. They should have sympathised with him; to envy him was ridiculous. And Aaron the saint of the Lord. By divine choice Aaron was set apart to be holiness unto the Lord, and instead of thanking God that he had favoured them with a high priest by whose intercession their prayers would be presented, they cavilled at the divine election, and quarrelled with the man who was to offer sacrifice for them. Thus neither church nor state was ordered aright for them; they would snatch from Moses his sceptre, and from Aaron his mitre. It is the mark of bad men that they are envious of the good, and spiteful against their best benefactors.

Verse 17. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.* Korah is not mentioned, for mercy was extended to his household, though he himself perished. The earth

could no longer bear up under the weight of these rebels and ingrates: God's patience was exhausted when they began to assail his servants, for his children are very dear to him, and he that toucheth them touches the apple of his eye. Moses had opened the sea for their deliverance, and now that they provoke him, the earth opens for their destruction. It was time that the nakedness of their sins was covered, and that the earth should open her mouth to devour those who opened their mouths against the Lord and his servants.

Verse 18. *And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.* The Levites who were with Korah perished by fire, which was a most fitting death for those who intruded into the priesthood, and so offered strange fire. God has more than one arrow in his quiver, the fire can consume those whom the earthquake spares. These terrible things in righteousness are mentioned here to show the obstinacy of the people in continuing to rebel against the Lord. Terrors were as much lost upon them as mercies had been; they could neither be drawn nor driven.

Verse 19. *They made a calf in Horeb.* In the very place where they had solemnly pledged themselves to obey the Lord they broke the second, if not the first, of his commandments, and set up the Egyptian symbol of the ox, and bowed before it. The ox image is here sarcastically called "a calf"; idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God. The Israelites were foolish indeed when they thought they saw the slightest divine glory in a bull, nay, in the mere image of a bull. To believe that the image of a bull could be the image of God must need great credulity. And worshipped the molten image. Before it they paid divine honours, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." This was sheer madness. After the same fashion the Ritualists must needs set up their symbols and multiply them exceedingly. Spiritual worship they seem unable to apprehend; their worship is sensuous to the highest degree, and appeals to eye, and ear, and nose. O the folly of men to block up their own way to acceptable worship, and to make the path of spiritual religion, which is hard to our nature, harder still through the stumblingblocks which they cast into it. We have heard the richness of Popish paraphernalia much extolled, but an idolatrous image when made of gold is not one jot the less abominable than it would have been had it been made of dross and dung: the beauty of art cannot conceal the deformity of sin. We are told also of the suggestiveness of their symbols, but what of that, when God forbids the use of them? Vain also is it to plead that such worship is hearty. So much the worse. Heartiness in forbidden actions is only an increase of transgression.

Verse 20. *Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.* They said that they only meant to worship the one God under a fitting and suggestive similitude by which his great power would be set forth to the multitude; they pleaded the great Catholic revival which followed upon this return to a more ornate ceremonial, for the people thronged around Aaron, and danced before the calf with all their might. But in very deed they had given up the true God, whom it had been

their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to him, not a representation of him; for how should he be likened to a bullock? The psalmist is very contemptuous, and justly so: irreverence towards idols is an indirect reverence to God. False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped, are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. We are by far too mealy mouthed about these infamous abominations: God abhors them, and so should we. To renounce the glory of spiritual worship for outward pomp and show is the height of folly, and deserves to be treated as such.

Verse 21. *They forgot God their saviour.* Remembering the calf involved forgetting God. He had commanded them to make no image, and in daring to disobey they forgot his commands. Moreover, it is clear that they must altogether have forgotten the nature and character of Jehovah, or they could never have likened him to a grass eating animal. Some men hope to keep their sins and their God too—the fact being that he who sins is already so far departed from the Lord that he has actually forgotten him. Which had done great things in Egypt. God in Egypt had overcome all the idols, and yet they so far forgot him as to liken him to them. Could an ox work miracles? Could a golden calf cast plagues upon Israel's enemies? They were brutish to set up such a wretched mockery of deity, after having seen what the true God could really achieve. "Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea". They saw several ranges of miracles, the Lord did not stint them as to the evidences of his eternal power and godhead, and yet they could not rest content with worshipping him in his own appointed way, but must needs have a Directory of their own invention, an elaborate ritual after the old Egyptian fashion, and a manifest object of worship to assist them in adoring Jehovah. This was enough to provoke the Lord, and it did so; how much he is angered every day in our own land no tongue can tell.

Verse 23. *Therefore he said that he would destroy them.* The threatening of destruction came at last. For the first wilderness sin he chastened them, sending leanness into their soul; for the second he weeded out the offenders, the flame burned up the wicked; for the third he threatened to destroy them; for the fourth he lifted up his hand and almost came to blows (Ps 106:26); for the fifth he actually smote them, "and the plague brake in among them"; and so the punishment increased with their perseverance in sin. This is worth noting, and it should serve as a warning to the man who goeth on in his iniquities. God tries words before he comes to blows, "he said that he would destroy them": but his words are not to be trifled with, for he means them, and has power to make them good. Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach. Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers. Moses had great power with God. He was an eminent type of our Lord, who is called, as Moses here is styled, "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." As the Elect Redeemer interposed between the Lord and a sinful world, so did Moses stand between the

Lord and his offending people. The story as told by Moses himself is full of interest and instruction, and tends greatly to magnify the goodness of the Lord, who thus suffered himself to be turned from the fierceness of his anger. With disinterested affection, and generous renunciation of privileges offered to himself and his family, the great Lawgiver interceded with the Lord to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. Behold the power of a righteous man's intercession. Mighty as was the sin of Israel to provoke vengeance, prayer was mightier in turning it away. How diligently ought we to plead with the Lord for this guilty world, and especially for his own backsliding people! Who would not employ an agency so powerful for an end so gracious! The Lord still harkens to the voice of a man, shall not our voices be often exercised in supplicating for a guilty people? **Verse 24.** *Yea, they despised the pleasant land.* They spoke lightly of it, though it was the joy of all lands: they did not think it worth the trouble of seeking and conquering; they even spoke of Egypt, the land of their iron bondage, as though they preferred it to Canaan, the land which floweth with milk and honey. It is an ill sign with a Christian when he begins to think lightly of heaven and heavenly things; it indicates a perverted mind, and it is, moreover, a high offence to the Lord to despise that which he esteems so highly that he in infinite love reserves it for his own chosen. To prefer earthly things to heavenly blessings is to prefer Egypt to Canaan, the house of bondage to the land of promise. They believed not his word. This is the root sin. If we do not believe the Lord's word, we shall think lightly of his promised gifts. "They could not enter in because of unbelief"—this was the key which turned the lock against them. When pilgrims to the Celestial City begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey's end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travellers. Israel's unbelief demanded spies to see the land; the report of those spies was of a mingled character, and so a fresh crop of unbelief sprang up, with consequences most deplorable.

Verse 25. *But murmured in their tents.* From unbelief to murmuring is a short and natural step; they even fell to weeping when they had the best ground for rejoicing. Murmuring is a great sin and not a mere weakness; it contains within itself unbelief, pride, rebellion, and a whole host of sins. It is a home sin, and is generally practised by complainers "in their tents," but it is just as evil there as in the streets, and will be quite as grievous to the Lord. And hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Making a din with their own voices, they refused attention to their best Friend. Murmurers are bad hearers.

Verse 26. *Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness.* He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; he commenced his work of judgment upon them, and they began to die. Only let God lift his hand against a man and his day has come; he falls terribly whom Jehovah overthrows. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them *in the lands.* Foreseeing that their descendants would reproduce their sins, he solemnly declared that he would give them over to captivity and the sword. Those whose carcasses fell in the

wilderness were, in a sense, exiles from the land of promise, and, being surrounded by many hostile tribes, they were virtually in a foreign land: to die far off from their father's inheritance was a just and weighty doom, which their rebellions had richly deserved. Our own loss of fellowship with God, and the divisions in our churches, doubtless often come to us as punishments for the sins out of which they grow. If we will not honour the Lord we cannot expect him to honour us. Our captains shall soon become captives, and our princes shall be prisoners if we forget the Lord and despise his mercies. Our singing shall be turned into sighing, and our mirth into misery if we walk contrary to the mind of the Lord.

Verse 28. *They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor.* Ritualism led on to the adoration of false gods. If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god. This abomination of the Moabites was an idol in whose worship women gave up their bodies to the most shameless lust. Think of the people of a holy God coming down to this. And ate the sacrifices of the dead. In the orgies with which the Baalites celebrated their detestable worship Israel joined, partaking even in their sacrifices as earnest inner court worshippers, though the gods were but dead idols. Perhaps they assisted in necromantic rites which were intended to open a correspondence with departed spirits, thus endeavouring to break the seal of God's providence, and burst into the secret chambers which God has shut up. Those who are weary of seeking the living God have often shown a hankering after dark sciences, and have sought after fellowship with demons and spirits. To what strong delusions those are often given up who cast off the fear of God! This remark is as much needed now as in days gone by.

Verse 29. *Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.* Open licentiousness and avowed idolatry were too gross to be winked at. This time the offences clamoured for judgment, and the judgment came at once. Twenty-four thousand persons fell before a sudden and deadly disease which threatened to run through the whole camp. Their new sins brought on them a disease new to their tribes. When men invent sins God will not be slow to invent punishments. Their vices were a moral pest, and they were visited with a bodily pest: so the Lord meets like with its like.

Verse 30. *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.* God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. This righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practised at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp javelin he transfixed the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and

seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.

Verse 31. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.* Down to the moment when this psalm was penned the house of Phinehas was honoured in Israel. His faith had performed a valorous deed, and his righteousness was testified of the Lord, and honoured by the continuance of his family in the priesthood. He was impelled by motives that what would otherwise have been a deed of blood was justified in the sight of God; nay, more, was made the evidence that Phinehas was righteous. No personal ambition, or private revenge, or selfish passion, or even fanatical bigotry, inspired the man of God, but zeal for God, indignation at open filthiness, and true patriotism urged him on. Once again we have cause to note the mercy of God that even when his warrant was out, and actual execution was proceeding, he stayed his hand at the suit of one man: finding, as it were, an apology for his grace when justice seemed to demand immediate vengeance.

Verse 32. *They angered him also at the waters of strife.* Will they never have done? The scene changes, but the sin continues. Aforetime they had mutinied about water when prayer would soon have turned the desert into a standing pool, but now they do it again after their former experience of the divine goodness. This made the sin a double, yea a sevenfold offence, and caused the anger of the Lord to be the more intense. So that it went in with Moses for their sakes. Moses was at last wearied out, and began to grow angry with them and utterly hopeless of their ever improving; can we wonder at it, for he was man and not God? After forty years bearing with them the meek man's temper gave way, and he called them rebels, and showed unhallowed anger; and therefore he was not permitted to enter the land which he desired to inherit. Truly, he had a sight of the goodly country from the top of Pisgah, but entrance was denied him, and thus it went ill with him. It was their sin which angered him, but he had to bear the consequences; however clear it may be that others are more guilty than ourselves, we should always remember that this will not screen us, but every man must bear his own burden.

Verse 33. *Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.* Which seems a small sin compared with that of others, but then it was the sin of Moses, the Lord's chosen servant, who had seen and known so much of the Lord, and therefore it could not be passed by. He did not speak blasphemously, or falsely, but only hastily and without care; but this is a serious fault in a

lawgiver, and especially in one who speaks for God. This passage is to our mind one of the most terrible in the Bible. Truly we serve a jealous God. Yet he is not a hard master, or austere; we must not think so, but we must then rather be jealous of ourselves, and watch that we live the more carefully, and speak the more advisedly, because we serve such a Lord. We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour.

Verse 34. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them.* They were commissioned to act as executioners upon races condemned for their unnatural crimes, and through sloth, cowardice, or Sinful complacency they sheathed the sword too soon, very much to their own danger and disquietude. It is a great evil with professors that they are not zealous for the total destruction of all sin within and without. We make alliances of peace where we ought to proclaim war to the knife; we plead our constitutional temperament, our previous habits, the necessity of our circumstances, or some other evil excuse as an apology for being content with a very partial sanctification, if indeed it be sanctification at all. We are slow also to rebuke sin in others, and are ready to spare respectable sins, which like Agag walk with mincing steps. The measure of our destruction of sin is not to be our inclination, or the habit of others, but the Lord's command. We have no warrant for dealing leniently with any sin, be it what it may.

Verse 35. *But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.* It was not the wilderness which caused Israel's sins; they were just as disobedient when settled in the land of promise. They found evil company, and delighted in it. Those whom they should have destroyed they made their friends. Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites, and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity. It was certain that they could learn no good from men whom the Lord had condemned to utter destruction. Few would wish to go to the condemned cell for learning, yet Israel sat at the feet of accursed Canaan, and rose up proficient in every abomination. This, too, is a grievous but common error among professors: they court worldly company and copy worldly fashions, and yet it is their calling to bear witness against these things. None can tell what evil has come of the folly of worldly conformity.

Verse 36. *And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.* They were fascinated by the charms of idolatry, though it brings misery upon its votaries. A man cannot serve sin without being ensnared by it. It is like birdlime, and to touch it is to be taken by it. Samson laid his head in the Philistine woman's lap, but ere long he woke up shorn of his strength. Dalliance with sin is fatal to spiritual liberty.

Verse 37. *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.* This was being snared

indeed; they were spell bound by the cruel superstition, and were carried so far as even to become murderers of their own children, in honour of the most detestable deities, which were rather devils than gods. "And shed innocent blood." The poor little ones whom they put to death in sacrifice had not been partakers of their sin, and God looked with the utmost indignation upon the murder of the innocent. "Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Who knows how far evil will go? It drove men to be unnatural as well as ungodly. Had they but thought for a moment, they must have seen that a deity who could be pleased with the blood of babes spilt by their own sires could not be a deity at all, but must be a demon, worthy to be detested and not adored. How could they prefer such service to that of Jehovah? Did *he* tear their babes from their bosoms and smile at their death throes? Men will sooner wear the iron yoke of Satan than carry the pleasant burden of the Lord; does not this prove to a demonstration the deep depravity of their hearts? If man be not totally depraved, what worse would he do if he were? Does not this verse describe the ne plus ultra of iniquity? And the land was polluted with blood. The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled with the reeking gore of innocent babes, and by the blood red hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils. Alas! alas! What vexation was this to the spirit of the Lord.

Verse 39. *Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.* Not only the land but the inhabitants of it were polluted. They broke the marriage bond between them and the Lord, and fell into spiritual adultery. The language is strong, but the offence could not be fitly described in less forcible words. As a husband is deeply dishonoured and sorely wounded should his wife become unchaste and run riot with many paramours in his own house, so was the Lord incensed at his people for setting up gods many and lords many in his own land. They made and invented new gods, and then worshipped what they had made. What a folly! Their novel deities were loathsome monsters and cruel demons, and yet they paid them homage. What wickedness! And to commit this folly and wickedness they cast off the true God, whose miracles they had seen, and whose people they were. This was provocation of the severest sort.

Verses 40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his *people, in so much that he abhorred his own inheritance.* Not that even then he broke his covenant or utterly cast off his offending people, but he felt the deepest indignation, and even looked upon them with abhorrence. The feeling described is like to that of a husband who still loves his guilty wife, and yet when he thinks of her lewdness feels his whole nature rising in righteous anger at her, so that the very sight of her afflicts his soul. How far the divine wrath can burn against those whom he yet loves in his heart it were hard to say, but certainly Israel pushed the experiment to the extreme. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen. This was the manifestation of his abhorrence. He gave them a taste of the result of sin; they spared the heathen, mixed with them and imitated them, and soon they had to

smart from them, for hordes of invaders were let loose upon them to spoil them at their pleasure. Men make rods for their own backs. Their own inventions become their punishments. And they that hated them ruled over them. And who could wonder? Sin never creates true love. They joined the heathen in their wickedness, and they did not win their hearts, but rather provoked their contempt. If we mix with men of the world they will soon become our masters and our tyrants, and we cannot want worse.

Verse 42. *Their enemies also oppressed them.* This was according to their nature; an Israelite always fares ill at the hands of the heathen. Leniency to Canaan turned out to be cruelty to themselves. And they were brought into subjection under their hand. They were bowed down by laborious bondage, and made to lie low under tyranny. In their God they had found a kind master, but in those with whom they had perversely sought fellowship they found despots of the most barbarous sort. He who leaves his God leaves happiness for misery. God can make our enemies to be rods in his hands to flog us back to our best Friend.

Verse 43. *Many times did he deliver them.* By reading the book of Judges we shall see how truthful is this sentence: again and again their foes were routed, and they were set free again, only to return with rigour to their former evil ways. But they provoked him with their counsel. With deliberation they agreed to transgress anew; self will was their counsellor, and they followed it to their own destruction. And were brought low for their iniquity. Worse and worse were the evils brought upon them, lower and lower they fell in sin, and consequently in sorrow. In dens and caves of the earth they hid themselves; they were deprived of all warlike weapons, and were utterly despised by their conquerors; they were rather a race of serfs than of free men until the Lord in mercy raised them up again. Could we but fully know the horrors of the wars which desolated Palestine, and the ravages which caused famine and starvation, we should shudder at the sins which were thus rebuked. Deeply engrained in their nature must the sin of idolatry have been, or they would not have returned to it with such persistence in the teeth of such penalties; we need not marvel at this, there is a still greater wonder, man prefers sin and hell to heaven and God. The lesson to ourselves, as God's people, is to walk humbly and carefully before the Lord and above all to keep ourselves from idols. Woe unto those who become partakers of Rome's idolatries, for they will be joined with her in her plagues. May grace be given to us to keep the separated path, and remain undefiled with the fornication of the scarlet harlot of Babylon.

Verse 44. *Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.* Notwithstanding all these provoking rebellions and detestable enormities the Lord still heard their prayer and pitied them. This is very wonderful, very godlike. One would have thought that the Lord would have shut out their prayer, seeing they had shut their ears against his admonitions; but no, he had a father's heart, and a sight of their sorrows touched his soul, the sound of their cries overcame his heart, and he looked upon them with compassion. His fiercest wrath towards his own people is only a temporary flame, but

his love burns on for ever like the light of his own immortality.

Verse 45. *And he remembered for them his covenant.* The covenant is the sure foundation of mercy, and when the whole fabric of outward grace manifested in the saints lies in ruins this is the fundamental basis of love which is never moved, and upon it the Lord proceeds to build again a new structure of grace. Covenant mercy is sure as the throne of God. And repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He did not carry out the destruction which he had commenced. Speaking after the manner of men he changed his mind, and did not leave them to their enemies to be utterly cut off, because he saw that his covenant would in such a case have been broken. The Lord is so full of grace that he has not only mercy but mercies, yea a multitude of them, and these live in the covenant and treasure up good for the erring sons of men.

Verse 46. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.* Having the hearts of all men in his hands he produced compassion even in heathen bosoms. Even as he found Joseph friends in Egypt, so did he raise up sympathizers for his captive servants. In our very worst condition our God has ways and means for allaying the severity of our sorrows: he can find us helpers among those who have been our oppressors, and he will do so if we be indeed his people.

Verse 47. *This is the closing prayer, arranged by prophecy for those who would in future time be captives, and suitable for all who before David's days had been driven from home by the tyranny of the various scatterings by famine and distress which had happened in the iron age of the judges.* Save us, O Lord our God. The mention of the covenant encouraged the afflicted to call the Lord their God, and this enabled them with greater boldness to entreat him to interpose on their behalf and rescue them. And gather us from among the Heathen. Weary now of the ungodly and their ways, they long to be brought into their own separated country, where they might again enjoy the means of grace, enter into holy fellowship with their brethren, escape from contaminating examples, and be free to wait upon the Lord. How often do true believers now a days long to be removed from ungodly households, where their souls are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. To give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Weaned from idols, they desire to make mention of Jehovah's name alone, and to ascribe their mercies to his ever abiding faithfulness and love. The Lord had often saved them for his holy name's sake, and therefore they feel that when again restored they would render all their gratitude to that saving name, yea, it should be their glory to praise Jehovah and none else.

Verse 48. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to *everlasting*. Has not his mercy endured for ever, and should not his praise be of like duration? Jehovah, the God of Israel, has blessed his people, should they not also bless him? And let all the people say, Amen. They have all seen spared by his grace, let them all join in the adoration with loud unanimous voice. What a thunder of praise would thus be caused! Yet should a nation thus magnify him, yea, should all the

nations past and present unite in the solemn acclaim, it would fall far short of his deserts. O for the happy day when all flesh shall see the glory of God, and all shall aloud proclaim his praise.

Praise ye the LORD, or "*Hallelujah*."

Reader, praise thou the Lord, as he who writes this feeble exposition now does with his whole heart.

"Now blest, for ever blest, be He,

The same throughout eternity,

Our Israel's God adored!

Let all the people join the lay,

And loudly, `Hallelujah', say,

`Praise ye the living Lord!'"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 1. *For he is good*; essentially, solely and originally; is communicative and diffusive of his goodness; is the author of all good and no evil; and is gracious and merciful and ready to forgive.

John Gill.

Verse 1. *For he is good: for his goodness endureth for ever.* Observe here what is a true and perfect confession of the divine goodness. Whenever God so blesses his own people that his goodness is perceived by carnal sense, in bestowing riches, honours, peace, health and things of that kind, then it is easy to acknowledge that God is good, and that acknowledgment can be made by the most carnal men. The case stands otherwise when he visits offenders with the rod of correction and scourges them with the grace of chastisement. Then the flesh hardly bears to confess what by its own sense it does not perceive. It fails to discern the goodness of God unto salvation in the severity of the rod and the scourging, and therefore refuses to acknowledge that goodness in strokes and sufferings. The prophet, however, throughout this Psalm celebrates in many instances the way wherein the sinning people were arrested and smitten. And when he proposed that this Psalm should be sung in the church of God, Israel was under the cross and afflictions. Yet he demands that Israel should acknowledge that the Lord is good, that his mercy endureth for ever, even in the act of smiting the offender. That therefore alone is a true and full confession of the divine goodness which is made not only in prosperity but also in adversity. *Musculus.*

Verse 1. There is,

1. The doxology;

2. Invitation;

3. The reason that we should, and why we should, give thanks always;

4. The greatness of the work. But "who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?" That is, it is impossible for any man in the world to do this great duty aright, as he should.

5. The best mode and method of giving thanks. "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." As if he had said, "This is indeed a vast duty; but yet he makes the best essay towards it that sets himself constantly to serve God and keep his commandments."—*William Cooper*, in the "*Morning Exercises*."

Verse 1. The first and two last verses of this psalm form a part of that psalm which David delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to be sung before the ark of the covenant, after it was brought from the house of Obbedom to Mount Zion. See 1Ch 16:34-36. Hence it has been ascribed to the pen of David. Many of the ancients thought, and they are followed by Horsley and Mudge, that it was written during the captivity; resting their opinion chiefly on verse 47; but as that verse occurs in the Psalm of David recorded in 1Ch 16:35, this argument is clearly without force. *James Anderson's Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 2. *Who can utter?* etc. This verse is susceptible of two interpretations; for if you read it in connection with the one immediately following, the sense will be, that all men are not alike equal to the task of praising God, because the ungodly and the wicked do nothing else than profane his holy name with their unclean lips; as it is said in the fiftieth psalm: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" And hence to this sentence the following clause should have been annexed, in the form of a reply, "Blessed are they that keep judgment." I am of opinion, however, that the prophet had another design, namely, that there is no man who has ever endeavoured to concentrate all his energies, both physical and mental, in the praising of God, but will find himself inadequate for so lofty a subject, the transcendent grandeur of which overpowers all our senses. Not that he exalts the power of God designedly to deter us from celebrating its praises, but rather as the means of stirring us up to do so to the utmost of our power. Is it any reason for ceasing our exertions, that with whatever alacrity we pursue our course, we yet come far short of perfection? But the thing which ought to inspire us with the greatest encouragement is the knowledge that, though ability may fail us, the praises which from the heart we offer to God are pleasing to him; only let us beware of callousness; for it would certainly be very absurd for those who cannot attain to a tithe of perfection, to make that the occasion of their not reaching to the hundredth part of it. *John Calvin.*

Verse 2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?* etc. Our sight fails us when we look upon the sun, overpowered by the splendour of his ways; and the mind's eye suffers the like in every meditation on God, and the more attention is bestowed in thinking of God, the more is the mental vision blinded by the very light of its own thoughts. For what canst thou say of him, what, I repeat, canst thou adequately say of him, who is more sublime than all loftiness, and more exalted than all height, and deeper than all depth, and clearer than all light, and brighter than all brightness, and more splendid than all splendour, stronger than all strength, more vigorous than all vigour, fairer than all

beauty, truer than all truth, and more puissant than puissance, and greater than all majesty, and mightier than all might, richer than all riches, wiser than all wisdom, gentler than all gentleness, more just than all justice, more merciful than all mercy?—*Tertullian*, quoted by Neale and Littledale.

Verse 2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?* etc. This may be resolved either into a negation or restriction. Few or none can "utter the mighty acts of the LORD," can "show forth all his praise"; few can do it in an acceptable manner, and none can do it in a perfect manner. And indeed it is not unusual in Scripture for such kind of interrogations to amount unto either a negation, or at least an expression of the rareness and difficulty of the thing spoken of: 1Co 2:16 Ps 92:1 Isa 53:1. Without a full confession of mercies it is not possible to make either a due valuation of them, or a just requital of them. And how impossible a thing it is fully to recount mercies, you may see by Ps 40:5; "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are toward us: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."—*Henry Jeanes*, in "*The Works of Heaven upon Earth*," 1649.

Verse 2. *Mighty acts of the Lord.* Or powers, to which answers the Greek word for the miracles of Christ (Mt 11:20,21), and Kimchi here restrains them to the wonders wrought in Egypt and at the Red Sea; but they may as well be extended to the mighty acts of God, and the effects of his power, in the creation of all things out of nothing; in the sustentation and government of the world; in the redemption of his people by Christ; in the conversion of sinners, and in the final perseverance of the saints; in all which there are such displays of the power of God as cannot be uttered and declared by mortal tongues. *John Gill*.

Verse 3. *Blessed are they that keep judgment,* etc. That are of right principles and upright practices; this is real and substantial praising of God. Thanks doing is the proof of thanksgiving; and the good life of the thankful is the life of thankfulness. Those that thank God only, and no more, are not only contumelious, but injurious. *John Trapp*.

Verse 3. *Keep judgment; doeth righteousness.* I doubt not that there is some difference; viz. that he is said to keep judgment who judgeth rightly, but he to do righteousness who acts righteously. *Augustine*.

Verse 3. I have read of Louis, king of France, that when he had through inadvertency granted an unjust suit, as soon as ever he had read those words of the Psalmist, "Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times," he presently recollected himself, and upon better thoughts gave his judgment quite contrary. *Thomas Brooks*.

Verse 4. *O visit me.* This is a beautiful figure. The prayer is not, "Give me a more intense desire, increased energy of action, that I may please thee, that I may serve thee, that I may go step by step up to thee, every step bringing with it is fresh sense of meritorious claim upon thee". No such thing. It is "Visit me"; "descend down upon me" daily from thine own lofty throne, for the fulfilment of thine own

purposes. "Visit me". *George Fisk*, 1851.

Verse 4. *O visit me with thy salvation.* Hugo takes the visit of God as that of a physician of whom healing of the eyes is sought, because it is immediately added, "That I may see", etc. *Lorinus*.

Verse 4. There is an ancient Jewish gloss which is noteworthy, that the petition is for a share in the resurrection in the days of Messiah in order to see his wonderful restoration of his suffering people. *Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 5. We may note that the threefold nature of man prompts the union of the three petitions of this verse in one. "That I may see, " is the prayer of the body, desiring the open vision of God; "and rejoice, "is the wish of the soul or mind, that the affections may likewise be gratified; and vice thanks, as the spirit needs to pour itself out in worship. Further, there are three names here given to the saints, each for a reason of its own. They are God's "chosen, " because of his predestinating grace, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:4); they are his "nation, "having one law and one worship under him as sole king, "And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (De 4:8) they are his "inheritance, "for it is written, "I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance" (Ps 2:8). *Hugo Cardinalis and Albertus Magnus*, in *Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 5. *That I may see the good of thy chosen.* That, having been predestined, and justified, we may come to see the good of thy chosen, which means that the very face of the Lord may be made conspicuous to us. (1Jo 3:2). By the "good of thy chosen" we are not to understand their own probity or goodness, but the supreme happiness that is their lot. "That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation." That we may partake in that unspeakable joy which arises from the beatific vision, which is the peculiar property of the chosen people, of which strangers cannot taste, of which the gospel says, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."—*Robert Bellarmine*, 1542-1621.

Verse 6. *We have sinned with our fathers.* Let us look a little further back, to find the age of sin; even as far as the original, from whence comes all the copy of imitation. Be they never so new in act, they are old in example: "We have sinned with our fathers." God tells them they had rebelled of old; "As your fathers did, so do ye" (Ac 8:51). Antiquity is no infallible argument of goodness: though Tertullian says the first things were the best things; and the less they distanced from the beginning, the poorer they were; but he must be understood only of holy customs. For iniquity can plead antiquity: he that commits a new act of murder finds it old in the example of Cain; drunkenness may be fetched from Noah; contempt of parents from Ham; women's lightness from the daughters of Lot. There is no sin but hath white hairs upon it, and is exceeding old. But let us look further back yet, even to Adam; there is the age of sin. This is that St. Paul calls the old man; it is almost as old as the root, but older than all the branches. Therefore our restitution by Christ to grace is called the new man. *Thomas*

Adams.

Verse 6. *We have sinned with our fathers.* It enhances the sin considerably by adding "with our fathers." He would have seemed to extenuate, not exaggerate, if he had said, We have sinned with other mortals. But by saying, We have sinned with our fathers, he by no means lessens but aggravates their offences, while he thereby extols the goodness of God who blessed not only those who acted sinfully and impiously, but also the children and descendants of the sinful and impious, even those whom he could with the highest justice have cut off as doubly detestable. *Musculus.*

Verse 6. *Sinned; committed iniquity; done wickedly.* The Rabbins tell us that there are three kinds and degrees of sin here set down in an ascending scale; against one's self, against one's neighbour, against God; sins of ignorance, sins of conscious deliberation, sins of pride and wickedness. *R. Levi and Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 6. Though the writers of the Scriptures were by divine inspiration infallibly preserved from extravagance, yet they use every appropriate variety of strong and condemnatory language against sin (Ps 106:6). Surely moral evil cannot be a trifle. Yet it breaks forth on all occasions and on all hands. Sometimes it is in the form of forgetfulness of God (Ps 106:13,21), sometimes of rash impetuosity towards evil (Ps 106:13), sometimes of strong, imperious lusts (Ps 106:14), sometimes of vile unbelief (Ps 106:12,24), and so of the whole catalogue of offences against God and man. O how vile we are!—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* Though the elders went along with Moses, and heard him shew his commission to Pharaoh, and make his demands in the name of the Lord to let Israel go, (Ex 3:16); yea, and they saw the judgments of God on Egypt; yet "they did not understand" that these wonders would do the work of their deliverance. At first they thought it was worse with them. Much less did they understand, that their deliverance should be a type of eternal deliverance, that God would be their God, as after is explained in the preface to the ten commandments. And because they "understood not his wonders, "therefore they "remembered not his mercies." A shallow understanding causeth a short memory. *Nathaniel Homes, 1652.*

Verse 7. *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* It is more than probable, that many of the Israelites ascribed most of these wonders to the skill of Moses transcending that of the Egyptian magicians or to his working by the assistance of a higher and more potent spirit than that which assisted them. Or, in case they did believe them to have been the effects of a Divine Power, yet they did not inure their minds seriously to consider it, so as to have a standing awe of that power imprinted upon their hearts by such a consideration: and he that considers great and important matters superficially, in the language of the Scripture, does not understand them. *Robert South.*

Verse 7. *Understood not...remembered not.* He reproveth both their understanding and memory. Understanding there was need of; that they might meditate unto what eternal blessings God was

calling them through these temporal ones; and of memory, that at least they might not forget the temporal wonders which had been wrought, and might faithfully believe, that by the same power which they had already experienced, God would free them from the persecution of their enemies; whereas they forgot the aid which he had given them in Egypt, by means of such wonders, to crush their enemies. *Augustine.*

Verse 7. One sin is a step to another more heinous; for not observing, is followed with not remembering, and forgetfulness of duty draweth on disobedience and rebellion. *David Dickson.*

Verse 7. *They provoked him.* To provoke, is an expression setting forth a peculiar and more than ordinary degree of misbehaviour, and seems to import an insolent daring resolution to offend. A resolution not contented with one single stroke of disobedience, but such a one as multiplies and repeats the action, till the offence greatens, and rises into an affront; and as it relates to God, so I conceive it as aimed at him in a threefold respect. First, of his power. Secondly, of his goodness. Thirdly, of his patience.

First. And first it rises up against the power and prerogative of God. It is, as it were, an assault upon God sitting upon his throne, a snatching at his sceptre, and a defiance of his very royalty and supremacy. He that provokes God does in a manner dare him to strike, and to revenge the injury and invasion upon his honour. He considers not the weight of God's almighty arm, and the edge of his sword, the swiftness and poison of his arrows, but puffs at all, and looks the terrors of sin revenging justice in the face. The Israelites could not sin against God, after those miracles in Egypt, without a signal provocation of that power that they had so late, and so convincing an experience of: a power that could have crushed an Israelite as easily as an Egyptian; and given as terrible an instance of its consuming force upon false friends, as upon professed enemies; in the sight of God, perhaps, the less sort of offenders of the two.

Secondly. Provoking God imports an abuse of his goodness. God, as he is clothed with power, is the proper object of our fear; but as he displays his goodness, of our love. By one he would command, by the other he would win and (as it were) court our obedience. And an affront to his goodness, his tenderness, and his mercy, as much exceeds an affront of his power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God shall show miracles of mercy, step out of the common road of providence, commanding the host of heaven, the globe of the earth, and the whole system of nature out of its course, to serve a design of goodness upon a people, as he did upon the Israelites; was not a provocation, after such obliging passages, infinitely base and insufferable, and a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through?

Thirdly. Provoking God imports an affront upon his longsuffering, and his patience. The movings of nature in the breasts of mankind, tell us how keenly, how regretfully, every man resents the abuse of his love; how hardly any prince, but one, can put up an offence against his acts of mercy; and how

much more affrontive it is to despise majesty ruling by the golden sceptre of pardon, than by the iron rod of penal law. But now patience is a further and an higher advance of mercy; it is mercy drawn out at length; mercy wrestling with baseness, and striving, if possible, even to weary and outdo ingratitude; and therefore a sin against this is the highest pitch, the utmost improvement, and, as I may so speak, the *ne plus ultra* of provocation. For when patience shall come to be tired, and even out of breath with pardoning, let all the invention of mankind find something further, either upon which an offender may cast his hope, or against which he can commit a sin. But it was God's patience the ungrateful Israelites sinned against; for they even plied and pursued him with sin upon sin, one offence following and thronging upon the neck of another, the last account still rising highest, and swelling bigger, till the treasures of grace and pardon were so far drained and exhausted, that they provoked God to swear, and what is more, to swear in his wrath and with a full purpose of revenge, that they should never enter into his rest. *Robert South.*

Verse 7. *They provoked him.* Wherein lay their provocation? *They remembered not the multitude of his mercies:* the former mercies of the Lord did not strengthen their trust in present troubles; that was one provocation. And as former mercies did not strengthen their trust, so the present troubles drew out their distrust, as another Scripture assures, reporting their behaviour in it (Ex 14:11): "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" What were these fearful forecasts, these amazing bodements of an unavoidable (as they apprehended) ruin, but the overflowing of unbelief, or distrust in God; and this was another provocation. Former mercies are forgotten, yea, eaten up by unbelief, as the seven lean kine in Pharaoh's dream, eat up the fat ones, and present difficulties are aggravated by unbelief, as if all the power of God could not remove and overcome them. And will not the Lord (think you) visit in anger such a sin as this?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7. *At the Red Sea.* That is to say, at the Arabian Gulf: literally, at the Sea of Suph, which, if Suph be not here a proper name, (as it seems to be in De 1:1, and, with a slight variation, in Nu 31:14) means the sea of weeds, and that sea is still called by a similar name, in modern Egypt. Its designation, throughout the books of the Old Testament, is in the Syriac version, and the Chaldee Paraphrased, likewise rendered the sea of weeds; which name may have been derived from the reeds growing near its shore: or from the weeds, or coralline productions, seen through its waters, and the corals seen at its bottom...Pliny states, that it is called the Red Sea from King Erythras, or from the reflection of a red colour by the sun, or from its sand and its ground, or from the nature of its water. *Daniel Cresswell.*

Verses 7-8. This psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving, as the first and last verses declare. Now because a man is most fit to praise God when he is most sensible of his own sin and unworthiness; the psalmist doth throughout this psalm lay Israel's sin and God's mercy together. Ps 106:7. Our Fathers

(says he) *understood not thy wonders in Egypt*. They saw them with their eyes, but they did not understand them with their heart: they did not apprehend the design and scope and end of God in those wonders: and therefore, "they remembered not (says the text) *thy mercies*; for a man remembers no more than he understands."

But it may be these mercies were very few, and so their sin in forgetfulness the less? Nay, not so, Ps 106:7, *They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies*.

But it may be this was their infirmity or weakness, and so they were rather to be borne withal? Not so, *but they rebelled against him*; so Montanus reads it better.

But it may be this sin was committed whilst they were in Egypt, or among the Egyptians, being put on by them? Not so neither, but when they were come out of Egypt, and only had to deal with God, and saw his glorious power at the Red Sea, then they rebelled against him, *at the sea, even at the Red Sea*.

What, then, did not the Lord destroy them? No says the text, *Notwithstanding*, all their grievance, unthankfulness, and their rebellion, *he saved them for his name's sake*. William Bridge, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons, Nov. 5, 1647.

Verse 8. *Nevertheless he saved them*. If God should not shew mercy to his people with a *nevertheless*, how should the glory of his mercy appear? If a physician should only cure a man that hath the headache or the toothache; one that hath taken cold, or some small disease; it would not argue any great skill and excellency in the physician. But when a man is nigh unto death, hath one foot in the grave, or is, in the eye of reason, past all recovery; if then the physician cure him, it argues much the skill and excellency of that physician. So now, if God should only cure, and save a people that were less evil and wicked; or that were good indeed, where should the excellence of mercy appear? But when a people shall be drawing near to death, lying bed ridden, as it were, and the Lord out of his free love, for his own name's sake, shall rise, and cure such an unworthy people, this sets out the glory of his mercy. It is said in the verse precedent, "They rebelled at the sea, even at the Red Sea", or, as in the Hebrew, "even *in* the Red Sea; "when the waters stood like walls on both sides of them; when they saw those walls of waters that never people saw before, and saw the power, the infinite power of God leading them through on dry land; *then* did they rebel, at the sea, *even in* the sea; and yet for all this the Lord saved them with a *notwithstanding* all this. And I say, shall the Lord put forth so much of grace upon a people, that were under the law; and not put forth much more of his grace upon those that are under the gospel?—William Bridge.

Verse 8. *For his name's sake*. Improve his name in every case; for he hath a name suiting every want, every need. Do you need wonders to be wrought for you? His name is Wonderful; look to him so to do, for his name's sake. Do you need counsel and direction? His name is the Counsellor: cast yourself on him and his name for this. Have you mighty enemies to debate with? His name is the

Mighty God; seek that he may exert his power for his name's sake. Do you need his fatherly pity? His name is the everlasting Father; "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Plead his pity, for his name's sake. Do you need peace external, internal, or eternal? His name is the Prince of Peace; seek for his name's sake, that he may create peace. O sirs, his name is JEHOVAH ROPHI, the Lord, the healer and physician; seek, for his name's sake, that he may heal all your diseases. Do you need pardon? His name is JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness: seek, for his name's sake, that he may be merciful to your unrighteousness. Do you need defence and protection? His name is JEHOVAH NISSI, the Lord your banner; seek, for his name's sake, that his banner of love and grace may be spread over you. Do you need provision in extreme want? His name is JEHOVAH JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide. Do you need his presence? His name is JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, the Lord is there: IMMANUEL, God with us: look to him to be with you, for his name's sake. Do you need audience of prayer? His name is the Hearer of prayer. Do you need strength? His name is the Strength of Israel. Do you need comfort? His name is the Consolation of Israel. Do you need shelter? His name is the City of Refuge. Have you nothing and need all His name is All in all. Sit down and devise names to your wants and needs, and you will find he hath a name suitable thereunto; for your supply, he hath wisdom to guide you; and power to keep you; mercy to pity you; truth to shield you; holiness to sanctify you; righteousness to justify you; grace to adorn you; and glory to crown you. Trust in his name, who saves for his name's sake. *Ralph Erskine, 1685-1752.*

Verse 9. *He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up.* A poetical expression, signifying that the Red Sea retired at God's command, just as a slave would fly from his master's presence on being severely rebuked. *Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 9. *He rebuked.* We do not read that any voice was sent forth from heaven to rebuke the sea; but he hath called the Divine Power by which this was effected, a rebuke, unless indeed any one may choose to say, that the sea was secretly rebuked, so that the waters might hear, and yet men could not. The power by which God acts is very abstruse and mysterious, a power by which he causeth that even things devoid of sense instantly obey at his will. *Augustine.*

Verse 9. *Wilderness. Midbar;* a broad expanse of poor dry land, suited for sheep walks (like our South Downs, or Salisbury Plain). Compare Isa 43:13. *William Kay.*

Verse 11. *There was not one of them left.* An emblem this of the utter destruction of all our spiritual enemies by Christ, who has not only saved us from them, but has entirely destroyed them; he has made an end of sin, even of all the sins of his people; he has spoiled Satan, and his principalities and powers; he has abolished death, the last enemy, and made his saints more than conquerors over all. Likewise it may be a representation of the destruction of the wicked at the last day, who will all be burnt up at the general conflagration, root and branch, not one will be left. See Mal 4:1. *John Gill.*

Verse 12. *Then believed they his words.* There is a temporary faith, as Mark calls it in (Mr 4:17), which is not so much a fruit of the Spirit of regeneration, as of a certain mutable affection, and so it soon passeth away. It is not a voluntary faith which is here extolled by the prophet, but rather that which is the result of compulsion, namely, because men, whether they will or not, by a sense which they have of the power of God, are constrained to show some reverence for him. This passage ought to be well considered, that men, when once they have yielded submission to God, may not deceive themselves, but may know that the touchstone of faith is when they spontaneously receive the word of God, and constantly continue firm in their obedience to it. *John Calvin.*

Verse 12. Natural affections raised high in a profession of religion will withstand temptations for a fit, but wait till the stream runs lower, and you will see. What a fit of affection had the Israelites when their eyes had seen that miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea! What songs of rejoicing had they! what resolves never to distrust him again! *Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.* Satan doth not presently urge them to murmuring and unbelief, though that was his design, but he staid till the fit was over, and then he could soon tempt them to *forget his works.* *Richard Gilpin in "A Treatise of Satan's Temptations," 1677.*

Verse 12. In the very brevity of this verse, the only one of its kind in the narrative portion of the psalm, we may well see how short lived were their gratitude, belief, and worship of God; as it follows at once, *They soon forgat, etc.* *Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 12-13. They sang his praise. They soon forgat his works. This was said of that generation of the Israelites, which came out of Egypt. The chapter which contains the portion of their history here alluded to, begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent; both uttered by the same lips, within the short space of three days. Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh, and destroyed their enemies. Their murmurs were excited by a comparatively trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed. Of persons whose thanksgivings were so quickly, and so easily changed to murmurings, it might well be said,—though they *sang God's praises,* "*they soon forgat his works.*" Unhappily, the Israelites are by no means the only persons of whom this may, in truth, be said. Their conduct, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or unexpected favours bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture, and pleases for an hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten. Springing from no higher principle than gratified self love, it is neither acceptable to God, nor productive of obedience to his laws; nor does it in any respect really resemble that holy, heaven born affection, whose language it often borrows, and whose name it

assumes. It may be called, distinctively, the gratitude of sinners; who, as they love those that love them, will of course be grateful to those that are kind to them; grateful even to God when they view him as kind.

Of these instances, the first which I shall notice is furnished by the works of *creation*; or, as they are often, though not very properly, called, the works of nature. In so impressive a manner do these works present themselves to our senses; so much of variety, and beauty, and sublimity do they exhibit; such power, and wisdom, and goodness do they display; that perhaps no man, certainly no man who possesses the smallest share of sensibility, taste, or mental cultivation, can, at all times, view them without emotion; without feelings of awe, or wonder, or admiration, or delight. But, alas, how transient, how unproductive of salutary effects, have all these emotions proved? Appetite and passion, though hushed for a moment, soon renewed their importunities; the glitter of wealth and distinction, and power, eclipsed, in our view, the glories of Jehovah; we sunk from that heaven toward which we seemed rising, to plunge afresh into the vortex of earthly pleasures and pursuits; we neglected and disobeyed him, whom we had been ready to adore; and continued to live without God, in a world which we had just seen to be full of his glory. A second instance of a similar nature is afforded by the manner in which men are often affected by God's works of *providence*. In these works his perfections are so constantly, and often so clearly displayed; our dependence on them is at all times so real, and sometimes so apparent; and they bear, in many cases, so directly and evidently upon our dearest temporal interests, that even the most insensible cannot, always, regard them with indifference.

But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgment is forgotten almost as soon as it is made. In a similar manner are men often affected by God's works of *grace*; or those works whose design and tendency it is, to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of man. These works most clearly display, not only the natural, but the moral perfections of Jehovah. Here his character shines, full-orbed and complete. That an exhibition of these wonders should make, at least, a temporary impression upon our minds, is no more than might naturally be expected. For a moment our hearts seem to be melted. We feel, and are ready to acknowledge, that God is good; that the Saviour is kind; that his love ought to be returned; that heaven is desirable! Like a class of hearers described by one great Teacher, we receive the word with joy; a joy not unmingled with something which resembles gratitude; and we sing, or feel as if we could with pleasure sing, God's praises. But we leave his house; the emotions there excited subside; like the earth, when partially softened by a wintry sun, our hearts soon regain their icy hardness; the wonders of divine grace are forgotten; and God has reason to say in sorrow and displeasure,—Your goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away. *Condensed from a Sermon by Edward Payson, 1783-1827.*

Verse 13. *They soon forgot his works.* They forgot, yea, "soon"; they made haste to forget, so the

original is: "They made haste, they forgot." Like men that in sleep shake Death by the hand, but when they are awake they will not know him. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 13. How may we know that we are rightly thankful? When we are careful to register God's mercy, 1Ch 16:4: "David appointed certain of the Levites, to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel." Physicians say the memory is the first thing that decays; it is true in spirituals: "*They soon forgot his works.*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 13. *They soon forgot.* As it is with a sieve or boulder, the good corn and fine flour goes through, but the light chaff and coarse bran remains behind; or as a strainer, that the sweet liquor is strained out, but the dregs are left behind: or as a grate, that lets the pure water run away, but if there be any straws, sticks, mud, or filth, that it holds. Thus it is with most men's memories; by nature they are but, as it were, *peritosa dolia*, mere river tubs, especially in good things very treacherous, so that the vain conceits of men are apt to be held in, when divine instructions and gracious promises run through; trifles and toys, and worldly things, they are apt to remember, tenacious enough; but for spiritual things they leak out; like Israel, *they soon forget them.* *William Gouge.*

Verse 13. *They soon forgot his works.* Three days afterwards, at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:24). *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13. *They waited not.* The insatiable nature of our desires is astonishing, in that scarcely a single day is allowed to God to gratify them. For should he not immediately satisfy them, we at once become impatient, and are in danger of eventually falling into despair. This, then, was the fault of the people, that they did not cast all their cares upon God, did not calmly call upon him, nor wait patiently until he was pleased to answer their requests, but rushed forward with reckless precipitation, as if they would dictate to God what he was to do. And, therefore, to heighten the criminality of their rash course, he employs the term *counsel*; because men will neither allow God to be possessed of wisdom, nor do they deem it proper to depend upon his counsel, but are more provident than becomes them, and would rather rule God than allow themselves to be ruled by him according to his pleasure. That we may be preserved from provoking God, let us ever retain this principle, That it is our duty to let him provide for us such things as he knows will be for our advantage. And verily, faith divesting us of our own wisdom, enables us hopefully and quietly to wait until God accomplishes his own work; whereas, on the contrary, our carnal desire always goes before the counsel of God, by its too great haste. *John Calvin.*

Verse 13. *They waited not.* They ought to have thought, that so great works of God towards themselves were not without a purpose, but that they invited them to some endless happiness, which was to be waited for with patience; but they hastened to make themselves happy with temporal things, which give no man true happiness, because they do not quench insatiable longing: "for whosoever", saith our Lord, "shall drink of this water, shall thirst again." Joh 4:13. *Augustine.*

Verse 13. *They waited not for his counsel.* Which neglect of theirs may be understood two ways. First, that they waited not for his open or declared counsel, to direct them what to do, but without asking his advice would needs venture and run on upon their own heads, to do what seemed good in their own eyes. Secondly, that they waited not for the accomplishment of his hidden and secret counsel concerning them; they would not tarry God's time for the bringing forth and bringing about his counsels. Not to wait upon God either way is very sinful. Not to wait for his counsel to direct us what to do, and not to wait for his doing or fulfilling his own counsel, argues at once a proud and an impatient spirit; in the one, men so even slight the wisdom of God, and in the other vainly presume and attempt to prevent his providence. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13. *They waited not for his counsel.* A believer acting his faith, hath great advantage of an unbeliever. An unbeliever is froward and passionate, and heady and hasty, when he is put to plunge; *he waits not for the counsel of God.* He leaps before he looks, before he hath eyes to see his way; but a believer is quiet and confident, and silent and patient, and prayerful, and standing upon his watch tower, to see what God will answer at such a time. *Matthew Lawrence, in "The Use and Practice of Faith," 1657.*

Verse 14. *In the wilderness.* When God by circumstances of time and place doth call for moderation of carnal appetite, the transgression is more heinous and offensive unto God: "They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness", where they should have contented themselves with any sort of provision. *David Dickson.*

Verse 14. *In the wilderness.* There, *where they had bread enough and to spare,* yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now *purely at God's finding;* so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were now, in all probability, *within a step of Canaan,* yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither. *They had flocks and herds of their own,* but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit or their good word: they did not only wish for flesh, "but" they "lusted exceedingly" after it. A desire even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called "lusting after evil things", (1Co 10:6), though the quails as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, Ps 105:40. Yet this was not all, "they tempted God in the desert", *where they had had such experience of his goodness and power,* and questioned whether he could and would gratify them therein. See Ps 78:19-20. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 15. *And he gave them their request,* etc. The throat's pleasure did shut up paradise, sold the birthright, beheaded the Baptist, and it was the chief of the cooks, Nebuzaradan, that first set fire to the temple, and razed the city. These effects are,

1. Grossness; which takes away agility to any good work; which makes a man more like a tun upon two pottle pots. Caesar said he mistrusted not Antony and Dolabella for any practices, because they

were fat; but Casca and Cassius, lean, hollow fellows, who did think too much. The other are the devil's crammed fowls, too fat to lay. Indeed, what need they travel far, whose felicity is at home; placing paradise in their throats, and heaven in their food?

2. Macilency of grace; for as it puts fatness into their bodies, so leanness into their souls. God fatted the Israelites with quails, but withal *sent leanness into their soul*. The flesh is blown up, the spirit doth languish. They are worse than man eaters, for they are self eaters: they put a pleurisy into their bloods, and an apoplexy into their souls. *Thomas Adams*.

Verse 15. Sent leanness into their soul. God affords us as great means for our increase in these Gospel times as ever he did; he puts us into fat pastures, and well watered, Ps 23:1-6; therefore it is a shame for God's people not to grow, not to "bring forth twins", as So 6:6. They should grow twice as fast, bring forth twice as fast, bring forth twice as many lambs, twice as much wool, twice as much milk, as those that go upon bare commons. All the world may cry shame on such a man that is high fed, and often fed with fat and sweet ordinances, if he be still like Pharaoh's lean kine, as lean and ill favoured as ever he was before. Certainly, fat ordinances and lean souls do not well agree. We are to look upon it as the greatest of judgments to have *leanness sent into our souls* while we are fed with *manna*. We look on it as an affliction to have an over lean body; but it's a far sadder condition to have a lean soul. Of the two, it were far better to have a well thriving body and a lean soul: it is a great mercy when both prosper, 3Jo 1:2: "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Oh it is a sweet thing, especially to have a prospering soul, and still upon the growing hand: and God expects it should be so, where he affords good diet, great means of grace; as Da 1:10: "The prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink." If you should look ill, who fare so well, I should be sure to bear the blame; it were so much as my head is worth. So certainly, where God affords precious food for precious souls, if these souls be lean under fat ordinances, either those that are fed, or those that feed them; either the stewards or the household; either minister, or people, or both, are sure to bear the blame. It is but equal and just that such should grow. We do not wonder to see lean sheep upon bare commons, but when we see sheep continue lean in fat pastures, we think their meat is ill bestowed on them; and therefore let us strive to be on the growing hand. *Matthew Lawrence*.

Verse 15. *Leanness* is rendered "loathing" by Bishop Horsley, which accords with the literal state of the case; but I think *leanness*, as applied to the soul is exceedingly descriptive of its spiritual barrenness and emptiness of aught like Divine tastes or enjoyments. *Thomas Chalmers*.

Verse 17. *The earth opened*, etc. This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcasses of men; but bodies informed with living souls, never before. To have seen them struck dead upon the earth had been fearful; but to see the earth at once their executioner and grave, was more horrible. Neither the sea nor the earth are fit to give passage; the sea is moist and flowing, and will

not be divided, for the continuity of it; the earth is dry and massy, and will neither yield naturally, nor meet again when it hath yielded: yet the waters did cleave to give way unto Israel for their preservation; the earth did cleave to give way to the conspirators in judgment; both sea and earth did shut their jaws again upon the adversaries of God. There was more wonder in this latter. It was a marvel that the waters opened; it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less marvel that the earth opened; but more marvel that it shut again; because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease. There are two sorts of traitors: the earth swallowed up the one, the fire the other. All the elements agree to serve the vengeance of their Maker. Nadab and Abihu brought fit persons, but unfit fire, to God; these Levites bring the right fire, but unwarranted persons, before him: fire from God consumes both. It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. The ministry will not grace the man; the man may disgrace the ministry. *Joseph Hall.*

Verse 17. Dathan and Abiram only are mentioned, and this in strict agreement with Nu 26:11, where it is said, "*the children of Korah died not.*" And the same thing is at least *implied* in Nu 16:27, where it is said, that, just before the catastrophe took place, "Dathan and Abiram" (there is no mention of Korah) "came out and stood in the door of their tents." See this noticed and accounted for in Blunt's *Veracity of the Books of Moses*, Part 1, 20 pounds, 86. *J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 19. *They made a calf.* And why a calf? Could they find no fitter resemblance of God amongst all the creatures? Why not rather the lordly lion, to show the sovereignty; vast elephant, the immensity; subtle serpent, the wisdom; long-lived hart, the eternity; swift eagle, the ubiquity of God, rather than the silly senseless calf, that eateth hay? But the shape matters not much, for if God be made like anything, he may be made like anything, it being as unlawful to fashion him an angel as a worm, seeing the commandment forbids as well the likeness of things in heaven above as ill earth beneath (Ex 20:4). But probably a calf was preferred before other forms because they had learned it from the Egyptians' worshipping their ox Apis. Thus the Israelites borrowed (Ex 12:35) not all gold and silver but some dross from the Egyptians, whence they fetch the idolatrous forms of their worship.

Verse 19. The modern Jews are of opinion that all the afflictions which ever since have, do, or shall befall their nation, are still the just punishments on them for this their first act of idolatry. And the rabbins have a saying that God never inflicts any judgment upon them, but there is an ounce of his anger on them for their ancestors' making the golden calf. A reverend friend of mine, conversing at Amsterdam with a Jewish youth (very capable and ingenious for one of that nation) endeavoured to make him sensible of God's anger upon them for rejecting and crucifying of Christ, for which foul act he showed how the Jews have lived many hundred years in miserable banishment. But the youth would in no wise acknowledge in their sufferings any effect or punishment of their murdering of

Christ, but taking his Bible turned to God's threatening immediately after their making of the calf (Ex 33:34); "Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them", so interpreting and applying all the numerous calamities which since have befallen them to relate to no other cause than that their first idolatry. Whereas, indeed, the arrears of their idolatry long ago were satisfied, and this is a new debt of later date contracted on themselves by their infidelity. *Thomas Fuller, 1608-1661, in "A Pisgah Sight of Palestine."*

Verse 19. *They made a calf*, etc. This people had seen this idolatrous service in Egypt; and now they did not more long after Egyptian food, than after this Egyptian god...It is an easy matter for men to be drawn to the practice of that idolatry that they have been accustomed to see practised in those places that they have a long time lived in. He that would take heed of idolatry, let him take heed of Egypt; the very air of Egypt (as I may so say) is infectious in this kind. See here, they had seen the worship of a young bullock in Egypt, and they must have a bullock. . . . The local seat of Antichrist (and what seat can that be but *Rome*?) is called in the Revelation by three names: it is called *Egypt*, Re 2:8. It is called *Sodom* in the same verse. It is called *Babylon* in many places of the Revelation. It is called *Babylon*, in regard of her cruelty. It is called *Sodom*, in regard to her filthiness; and *Egypt*, in regard of her *idolatry*. It is a hard matter for a man to live in Egypt, and not to taste and savour somewhat of the idolatry of Egypt. We had sometime, in England, a proverb about going to Rome. They said, a man that went the first time to Rome, he went to see a wicked man there; he that went the second rime to Rome, went to be acquainted with that wicked man there; he that went the third time, brought him home with him. How many have we seen (and it is pity to see so many) of our nobility and gentry go to those Egyptian, parts, and return home again; but few of them bring home the same manners, the same religion, nor the same souls they carried out with them. *Thomas Westfield, Bishop of Brigtow, in "England's Face in Israel's Glasse," 1658.*

Verse 19. *In Horeb*. There is a peculiar stress on the words "in Horeb", as denoting the very place where the great manifestation of God's power and presence has been made, and where the law had been given, whose very first words were a prohibition of the sin of idolatry. *Agellius, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 19-20. Apis, or Serapis, was a true living black bull, with a white list or streak along the back, a white mark in fashion of an half moon on his right shoulder, only two hairs growing on his tail (why just so many and no more, the devil knows), with a fair square blaze on his forehead, and a great bunch called cantharus under his tongue. What art their priests did use to keep up the breed and preserve succession of cattle with such gwrismata, or privy marks, I list not to inquire...Besides this natural and living bull, kept in one place, they also worshipped boun diacruson, a golden or gilded ox, the image or portraiture of the former. Some conceive this Apis to have been the symbol and emblem of Joseph the patriarch, so called from ba, *ab*, a father, seeing he is said to be made by God a father

to Pharaoh (Ge 45:8), that is, preserver of him and his country; and therefore the Egyptians, in after ages, gratified his memory with statues of an ox, a creature so useful in ploughing, sowing, bringing home, and treading out of corn, to perpetuate that gift of grain he had conferred upon them. They strengthen their conjecture because Serapis (which one will have to be nothing else but Apis with addition of *rv, sar*, that is, a prince, whence perchance our English Sir) was pictured with a bushel over his head, and Joseph (we know) was corn meter general in Egypt. Though others, on good ground, conceive ox worship in Egypt of far greater antiquity. However, hence Aaron (Ex 32:4), and hence afterwards Jeroboam (who flying from Solomon, lived some years with Shishak, king of Egypt, 1Ki 11:40) had the pattern of their calves, which they made for the children of Israel to worship. If any object the Egyptians' idols were bulls or oxen, the Israelites' but calves, the difference is not considerable; for (besides the objector never looked into the mouths of the latter to know their age) *gradus non variat speciem*, a less character is not another letter. Yea, Herodotus calls Apis himself *moscov*, a calf, and *Vitulus* is of as large acceptance among the Latins. Such an old calf the poet describes—

Ego hanc vitalam (ne forte recuses
Bis venit ad mulctram binos alit ubere faetus)
Depono.

My calf I lay (lest you mistake both tides

She comes to the pail and suckles twain besides).

But to put all out of doubt, what in Exodus is termed a calf, the psalmist calleth an ox (Ps 106:20).

—*Thomas Fuller*.

Verses 19-22. It is to be hoped, we shall never live to see a time, when the miracles of our redemption shall be forgotten; when the return of Jesus Christ from heaven shall be despaired of; and when the people shall solicit their teachers to fabricate a new philosophical deity, for them to worship, instead of the God of their ancestors, to whom glory hath been ascribed from generation to generation. *George Horne*.

Verse 20. *An ox that eateth grass.* The Egyptians, when they consulted Apis, presented a bottle of hay or of grass, and if the ox received it, they expected good success. *Daniel Cresswell*.

Verse 20. Although some of the Rabbins would excuse this gross idolatry of their forefathers, yet others more wise bewail them, and say that there is an ounce of this golden calf in all their present sufferings. *John Trapp*.

Verse 21. *They forgot God.* To devise images and pictures to put, us in the mind of God, is a very forgetting both of God's nature and of his authority, which prohibits such devices, for so doth the Lord expound it: "*They forgot God their saviour.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 21. Let us observe in this place that Israel is now for the third time accused of forgetting God;

above in Ps 106:7, afterwards in Ps 106:13, and now in Ps 106:21. And that he might shew the greatness of this forgetfulness he does not simply say they forgot God, but adds, *their Saviour*: not the Saviour of their fathers in former times, but *their own Saviour*. *Musculus*.

Verse 22. *Land of Ham.* Egypt is called the land of *Ham*, or rather *Cham*, *Mx*, because it was peopled by Mizraim, the son of Ham, and grandson of Noah. Plutarch (De Iside and Osiride) informs us, that the Egyptians called their country Chmia, *Chemia*; and the Copts give it the name of Chmi, *Chemi*, to the present day. *Comprehensive Bible*.

Verse 23. *Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.* Moses stood in the gap, and diverted the wrath of God; the hedge of religion and worship was broken down by a golden calf, and he made it up: Nu 16:41-42, the people murmured, rose up against Moses and Aaron, trod down the hedge of authority, whereupon the plague brake in upon them; presently Aaron steps That into the gap, makes up the hedge, and stops the plague, Nu 16:47-48 which they did was honourable; and they were repairers of breaches. We, through infinite mercy, have had some like Moses and Aaron, to make up our hedges, raise up our foundations, and stop some gaps; but all our gaps are not yet stopped. Are there not gaps in the hedge of doctrine? If it were not so, how came in such erroneous, blasphemous, and wild opinions amongst us? Are there not gaps in the hedges of civil and ecclesiastical authority? Do not multitudes trample upon magistracy and ministry, all powers, both human and divine? Are there not gaps in the worship of God? Do not too many tread down all churches, all ordinances, yea, the very Scriptures? Are there not gaps in the hedge of justice, through which the bulls of Bashan enter, which oppress the poor, and crush the needy? Am 4:1: Are there not gaps in the hedge of love; is not that bond of perfection broken? Are there not bitter envyings and strife amongst us; do we not bite and devour one another? Are there not gaps in the hedge of conscience? Is not the peace broken between God and your souls? Doth not Satan come in oft at the gap, and disturb you? Are there not gaps also in your several relations, whereby he gets advantage? Surely, if our eyes be in our heads, we may see gaps enough. *William Greenhill*.

Verse 23. *The breach.* This is a metaphor taken from a city which is besieged, and in the walls of which the enemy having made a "*breach*" is just entering in, to destroy it, unless he be driven back by some valiant warrior. Thus *Moses* stood, as it were "*in the breach*", and averted the wrath of God, when he was just going to destroy the Israelites. See Ex 32:1-35. *Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 23. If Christians could be brought to entertain a just sense of the value and power of intercessory prayer, surely it would abound. It is a terrible reproof against the lying prophets of Ezekiel's time: "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord" (Eze 13:5). Compare Ex 32:9-14. *William S. Plumer*.

Verse 24. *Yea, they despised.* When the promised inheritance of heaven (which was figured by the pleasant *land of promise*), is not counted worthy of all the pains and difficulties which can be

sustained and met with in the way of going toward it; the promised inheritance is but little esteemed of, as appeareth in the Israelites, who for love of ease, and fear of the Canaanites, were ready to turn back to Egypt: *They despised the pleasant land.* David Dickson.

Verse 24. *They despised the pleasant land.* This was a type of heaven, the good land afar off; the better country, the land of promise and rest; in which is fulness of provisions, and where there will be no hunger and thirst; where flows the river of the water of life, and stands the tree of life, bearing all manner of fruits; where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; the most delightful company of Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and glorified saints, and nothing to disturb their peace and pleasure neither from within nor from without. And yet this pleasant land may be said to be despised by such who do not care to go through any difficulty to it; to perform the duties of religion; to bear reproach for God's sake; to go through tribulation; to walk in the narrow and afflicted way which leads unto it; and by all such who do not care to part with their sinful lusts and pleasures; but prefer them and the things of this world to the heavenly state. John Gill.

Verse 24. One great bar to salvation is spiritual sloth. It is said of Israel, *They despised the pleasant land.* What should be the reason? Canaan was a paradise of delight, a type of heaven; aye, but they thought it would cost them a great deal of trouble and hazard in the getting, and they would rather go without it, they despised the pleasant land. Are there not millions of us who would rather go sleeping to hell, than sweating to heaven? I have read of certain Spaniards that live near where there is great store of fish, yet are so lazy that they will not be at the pains to catch them, but buy of their neighbours: such a sinful stupidity and sloth is upon the most, that though Christ be near them, though salvation is offered in the Gospel, yet they will not work out salvation. Thomas Watson.

Verse 24-25. Murmuring hath in it much unbelief and distrust of God. *They believed not his word; but murmured in their tents.* They could not believe that the wilderness was the way to Canaan, that God would provide and furnish a table for them there, and relieve them in all their straits. So it is with us in trouble. We quarrel with God's providence, because we do not believe his promises; we do not believe that this can be consistent with love, or can work for good in the end. John Willison, 1680-1750.

Verse 25. *But murmured.* Murmuring! It must have been a malady characteristic of the Hebrew people, or a disease peculiar to that desert. As we proceed with this narrative we are constantly meeting it, creaking along in discord harsh and chronic, or amazing earth and heaven by its shrill ear piercing paroxysms. They lift up their eyes, and as the Egyptians pursue, the people murmur. They come to a fountain, the water is bitter, and once more they murmur. Then no bread; murmurings redoubled. Moses is no longer in the Mount; murmurs. He takes too much upon him; more murmurs. When shall we reach that promised land?—murmurs extraordinary, loud murmurs. We are close to the land, but its inhabitants are giants, and their towns walled up to heaven. Oh, what a take in! and

the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs. *James Hamilton (1814-1867) in "Moses the man of God."*

Verse 25. The murmuring on this occasion seems to have been a social evil, they *murmured in their tents*. So do men in social life promote among each other prejudice and aversion to true religion. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 28. *They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor*,—rather "bound themselves with his badge": for it was the custom in ancient times, as it is now, in all Pagan countries, for every idol to have some specific badge, or ensign, by which his votaries are known. *John Kitto, in "Daily Bible Illustrations."*

Verse 28. *They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor.* The narrative (Nu 25:1-18) seems clearly to show that this form of Baal worship was connected with licentious rites. Without laying too much stress on the Rabbinical derivation of the word *rwp*, *hiatus*, *i.e.*, "*aperire hymenem virgineum*", we seem to have reason to conclude that this was the nature of the worship. Baal Peor was identified by the Rabbins and early fathers with Priapus (see the authorities quoted by Selden, *De Diis Syris*, 1., 4, p. 302, sq., who, however, dissents from this view.) This is, moreover, the view of Creuzer (2., 411), Winer, Gesenius, Furst, and almost all critics. The reader is referred for more detailed information particularly to Creuzer's *Symbolik* and Movers' *Phönizier*. *William Gotch, in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible."*

Verse 28. *Ate the sacrifices.* It was usual for the officers to eat the chief part of the sacrifice. Hence the remarks of Paul on this subject, 1Co 8:1-13. *Benjamin Boothroyd.*

Verse 28. *The dead.* The word *Mytm*, *maithim*, signifies *dead men*; for the idols of the heathen were generally men,—warriors, kings, or lawgivers,—who had been deified after their death; though many of them had been execrated during their life. *Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 28. *And they ate the sacrifices of the dead.*

His obsequies to Polydorus paying
A tomb we raise, and altars to the dead
With dark blue fillets and black cypress bind
Our dames with hair dishevelled stand to mourn;
Warm frothy bowls of milk and sacred blood
We offer, in his grave the spirit lay,
Call him aloud, and bid our last farewell. *Virgil.*

Verse 29. *They provoked him to anger with their inventions.* Note, that it is not said, *with their deeds*, but with their pursuits (*studies*). It is one thing simply to do a thing; it is quite another to pursue it earnestly night and day. The first may take place by chance, or through ignorance, or on account of some temptation, or violence, and that without the consent and against the inclination of the mind.

But the latter is brought about in pursuance of a fixed purpose and design and by effort and forethought. We see, therefore, in this passage that the patience of God was at length provoked to anger and fury when the people sinned not merely once and again, but when the pursuit of sin grew and strengthened. *Musculus.*

Verse 29. *Their inventions.* *Their sins* are here called by the name of "*their inventions.*" And so, sure, they are; as no ways taught us by God, but of our own imagining or finding out. For, indeed, our inventions are the cause of all sins. And if we look well into it we shall find our inventions are so. By God's injunction we should all live, and his injunction is, "You shall not do every man what seems good in his own eyes" (or finds out in his own brains), but "whatsoever I command you, that shall you do." De 12:8. But we, setting light by that charge of his, out of the old disease of our father Adam ("ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"), think it a goodly matter to be witty, and to find out things ourselves to make to ourselves, to be authors, and inventors of somewhat, that so we may seem to be as wise as *God*, if not wiser; and to know what is for our turns, as well as he, if not better. It was Saul's fault. God bade him destroy Amalek altogether, and he would invent a better way, to save some (forsooth) for sacrifice, which God could not think of. And it was St. Peter's fault, when he persuaded Christ from his passion, and found out a better way (as he thought) than Christ could devise. *Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 29. *Brake in upon them.* The image is that of a river which has burst its barriers; see Ex 19:24. The plague is the slaughter inflicted upon the people by command of Moses; Nu 25:4-5,8-9,18. "*The Speaker's Commentary.*"

Verse 30. *Then stood up Phinehas.* All Israel saw the bold lewdness of Zimri, but their hearts and eyes were so full of grief, that they had not room enough for indignation. Phinehas looked on with the rest, but with other affections. When he saw this defiance bidden to God, and this insult upon the sorrow of his people (that while they were wringing their hands, a proud miscreant durst outface their humiliation with his wicked dalliance), his heart boils with a desire of a holy revenge; and now that hand, which was used to a censer and sacrificing knife, takes tip his javelin, and, with one stroke, joins these two bodies in their death, which were joined in their sin, and in the very fragrance of their lust, makes a new way for their souls to their own place. O noble and heroical courage of Phinehas! Which, as it was rewarded of God, so is worthy to be admired of men. He doth not stand casting of scruples: Who am I to do this? The son of the high priest. My place is all for peace and mercy: it is for me to sacrifice, and pray for the sin of the people, not to sacrifice any of the people for their sin. My duty calls me to appease the anger of God what I may, not to revenge the sins of men; to pray for their conversion, not to work the confusion of any sinner. And who are these? Is not the one a great prince in Israel, the other a princess of Midian? Can the death of two so famous personages go unrevenged? Or, if it be safe and fit, why doth my uncle Moses rather shed his own tears than their

blood? I will mourn with the rest; let them revenge whom it concerneth. But the zeal of God hath barred out all weak deliberations; and he holds it now both his duty and his glory, to be an executioner of so shameless a pair of offenders. . . . Now the sin is punished, the plague ceaseth. The revenge of God sets out ever after the sin; but if the revenge of men (which commonly comes later) can overtake it, God gives over the chase. How oft hath the infliction of a less punishment avoided a greater! There are none so good friends to the state, as courageous and impartial ministers of justice: these are the reconcilers of God and the people, more than the prayers of them that sit still and do nothing. *Joseph Hall.*

Verse 30. *Then stood up Phinehas*, etc. Mark the mighty principle, which rolled like a torrent in the heart of Phinehas. The Spirit leaves it not obscure. The praise is this, "He was zealous for his God", Nu 25:13. He could not fold his arms, and see God's law insulted, his rule defied, his majesty and empire scorned. The servant's heart blazed in one blaze of godly indignation. He must be up to vindicate his Lord. His fervent love, his bold resolve, fear nothing in a righteous cause. The offending Zimri was a potent prince: nevertheless he spared him not. Believer, can you read this and feel no shame? Do your bold efforts testify your zeal? Sinners blaspheme God's name. Do you rebuke? His Sabbaths are profaned. Do you protest? False principles are current? Do you expose the counterfeits? Vice stalks in virtue's garb. Do you tear down the mask? Satan enthral's the world. Do you resist? Nay, rather are you not dozing unconcerned? Whether Christ's cause succeeds, or be cast down, you little care. If righteous zeal girded your loins, and braced your nerves, and moved the rudder of your heart, and swelled your sails of action, would God be so unknown, and blasphemy so daring? Mark, next, the zeal of Phinehas is sound minded. It is not as a courser without rein, a torrent unembanked, a hurricane let loose. Its steps are set in order's path. It executes God's own will in God's own way. The mandate says, let the offenders die. He aims a death blow, then, with obedient hand. The zeal, which heaven kindles, is always a submissive grace. *Henry Law, in "Christ is All", 1858.*

Verse 30. *Stood up*, as valiantly to do his work of zeal, as Moses had done to discharge the office of intercessor, and because he alone rose to set the example of resistance to the foul rites of Baal Peor. *Cassiodorus, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 30. *So the plague was stayed.* God himself puts this peculiar honour of staying the plague (when he was about to destroy the whole camp) upon this fact of Phinehas, saying, "He hath turned away my wrath", Nu 25:10-11, because he was acted with the same zeal for God's glory and Israel's good, as God himself is acted with for them, and feared not to lose his life in God's cause, by putting to death a prince and a princess in the very flagrancy of their lust at one blow. There is such an accent and such an emphasis put by the Lord on this act, (as the Jewish Rabbis observe), that here they begin the forty-first section or lecture of the Law, or (as Vatablus saith) the seventh section of the

book, which they call Phinehas. Moreover, it teacheth us, that zeal of justice in the cause of God is an hopeful means to remove God's wrath from, and to procure his mercy to, man. Thus David also made an atonement by doing justice on Saul's house, 2Sa 21:3, etc. . . . Phinehas by virtue of this promise of the priesthood (Nu 25:12-13) lived himself to a great old age, even (as some say) to three hundred years, as appeareth by Jud 20:28, where he then is found alive, for his zeal at this time. He lived so long that some of the Rabbis are of opinion that he died not at all, but is still alive, whom they suppose to be the Elias that is to come before the coming of Christ; but this notion is confuted by others of their Rabbis, and by the mention of his seed succeeding him in sacred Scripture. However, though few after the Flood did near attain to any such age, yet must Phinehas be very old in that time of Israel's warring with Benjamin...Phinehas's priesthood is called "everlasting", not in his person, but in his posterity, whose sons were successively high priests till the captivity of Babylon, 1Ch 6:4-16; and at the return out of captivity, Ezra, the great priest and scribe, was of his line, Ezr 7:1-6; and so it continued in that line until, or very near, the approach of our evangelical High Priest (as Christ is called, Heb 5:6), who was of the order of Melchizedek. *Christopher Ness.*

Verse 30. Why is the pacifying of God's wrath, and the staying of the plague ascribed to Phinehas, having a blush of irregularity in it, rather than to the acts of Moses and the judges, which were by express command from God and very regular? For answer, the acts of Moses and the judges *slaked the fire* of God's wrath, that of Phinehas *quenched* it; again, the acts of Moses and the judges had a rise from a *spark*, that of Phinehas from a *flame of zeal* and holy indignation in him; hence the Lord, who is exceedingly taken with the springs and roots of actions, sets the crown upon the head of Phinehas. *Edmund Staunton, in a Sermon preached before the House of Lords, 1644.*

Verse 30. *So the plague was stayed.* A man doth not so live by his own faith, but in *temporal respects* the faith of another man may do him good. Masters by their faith obtained healing for their servants, parents for their children, Mt 15:28. "Oh, man, great is thy faith!" "Jesus seeing their faith", healed the sick of the palsy. God's people for the town or place where they live: "The innocent" (*i.e.*, the faithful doer) "shall deliver the island", Job 22:30. Ge 18:32, "If ten righteous persons shall be found there, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Especially in Magistrates, *Moses*, Nu 14:1-45; *Hezekiah*, Isa 37:1-38, put up prayers, and God saved the people and places, they prayed for: *Then Phinehas executed judgment* (appeased God by faith) *and so the plague was stayed.* *Matthew Lawrence.*

Verse 30. Elevation of mind and sweetness of spirit are pearls of great price, and if we wish to preserve them we had better intrust them to God's own keeping. If Moses lost his faith, it was by first losing self command: and if a man lose this, it is hard to say what next he may lose: like the mad warrior who makes a missile of his shield and hurls it at the head of all enemy, he is henceforward open to every fiery dart, to the cut and thrust of every assailant. But, as John Newton remarks, "The

grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in a Christian on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son"; and as no man can tell on any dawning day but what that may be the most trying day in all his life, how wise to pray without ceasing, "uphold me according unto thy word. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips." "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."—*James Hamilton*.

Verse 32. *It went ill with Moses.* This judgment of God on that sin did not imply that he had blotted Moses out of the book of life, or the number of the saints, or otherwise than forgive his sin. For he continued still to talk with him, and advise with him of the governing of his people, and spake to Joshua that he should be faithful to him as his servant Moses. That was not the true Canaan from which he was shut out, but only the figure and shadow; and that he was allowed to see; a vision well worthy of all his labours, for the more excellent things signified by it. *Isaac Williams, in "The Characters of the Old Testament," 1873.*

Verse 33. *They provoked his spirit.* As Abraham was distinguished for his faith, so was Moses for his meekness; for Scripture has declared that he was "very meek, above all the men which were on the face of the earth", Nu 12:3. Yet, judging from facts recorded of him, we should be inclined to suppose that he was by nature remarkable for sensitiveness and hastiness of temper—that was his one besetting infirmity. Such appears to have been evinced when he slew the Egyptian; when he twice smote the rock in the wilderness; and on that occasion when he was "punished", as the psalmist says, "because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips", and when he broke the two tables of stone. Something of the same kind appears to have been the case with our own Hooker, whose biographer attributes to him such singular meekness, while his private writings indicate a temper keenly alive and sensitive to the sense of wrong. *Isaac Williams.*

Verse 33. *They provoked his spirit.* In a dispensation itself mainly gracious, and foreshadowing one which would be grace altogether, it was of prime importance that the mediating men should be merciful and gracious, long suffering, and slow to anger. And sure they were in marvellous manner. . . . Brimming, over with instruction as is this passage, we must leave it with a few remarks.

1. How careful preachers of the gospel and expounders of Scripture should be not to give an erroneous impression of God's mind or message. The mental acumen is rare, but the right spirit is rarer. But what is the right spirit?—A loving spirit, a gentle spirit, a faithful spirit, a meek and weaned spirit, a spirit which says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth", and a spirit which adds, "All that the Lord giveth me, that will I speak", that excellent spirit which is only imparted by the good Spirit of God. For if He withdraw, even a Moses ceases to be meek, and ceasing to be meek, even a Moses becomes a bad divine and an erroneous teacher, striking the rock that has been already stricken

once for all, and preaching glad tidings gruffly. He who gives the living water does not grudge it; but sometimes, instead of "Ho! every one that thirsteth", the preacher says, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and makes the very invitation repulsive.

2. When any one has run long and run well, how sad it is to stumble within a few steps of the goal! If Moses had an earthly wish, it was to see Israel safe in their inheritance, and his wish was all but consummated. Faith and patience had held out well nigh forty years, and in a few months more the Jordan would be crossed and the work would be finished. And who can tell but this very nearness of the prize helped to create something of a presumptuous confidence? The blood of Moses was hot to begin with, and he was not the meekest of men when he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. But he had got a good lesson in ruling his spirit, and betwixt the long sojourn with Jethro and the self-discipline needful in the charge of this multitude, he might fancy that he had now his foot on the neck of this enemy: when lo! the sin revives and Moses dies.

Blessed is the man that feareth alway! Blessed is the man who, although years have passed without an attempt at burglary, still bars his doors and sees his windows fastened! Blessed is the man who, although a generation has gone since the last eruption, forbears to build on the volcanic soil and dreads fires which have smouldered for fourscore years! Blessed is the man who, even when the high seas are crossed and the land is made, still keeps an outlook! Blessed is the man who, even on the confines of Canaan, takes heed of the evil heart, lest, with a promise of entering in, he should come short through unbelief!

Verse 33. *They provoked his spirit*, etc. Angry he certainly was; and when, reverting to a former miracle, the Most High directed him to take the wonder staff—his rod of many miracles and at the head of the congregation "speak to the rock", and it would "give forth its water", in the heat and agitation of his spirit he failed to implement implicitly the Divine command. Instead of speaking to the rock he spoke to the people, and his harangue was no longer in the language calm and dignified of the lawgiver, but had a certain tone of petulance and egotism. "Hear now, ye rebels, must we—must I and Aaron, not must Jehovah—fetch you water out of this rock?" And instead of simply speaking to it, he raised the rod and dealt it two successive strokes, just as if the rock were sharing the general perversity, and would no more than the people obey its Creator's bidding. He was angry, and he sinned. He sinned and was severely punished. Water flowed sufficient for the whole camp and the cattle, clear, cool, and eagerly gushing, enough for all the million; but at the same moment that its unmerited bounty burst on you, ye rebels, "a cup of wrath was put into the hand of Moses." (Van Oosterzee.) To you, ye murmurers, there came forth living water; to your venerable leaders the cup of God's anger. "The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Nu 20:12. *James Hamilton.*

Verse 33. *He spake unadvisedly with his lips.* The Lord desires him to address the rock, but Moses speaks to Israel. God wishes him to speak a word to the inanimate stone, and Moses strikes it twice. God still is willing that the people shall remain as his inheritance, but Moses evidently treats them with ill will and much offensiveness. God wishes to relieve, and give refreshing to the people in their thirst, and Moses is selected to cooperate with him in all such joy; but mark how, on this very day, a deep discord between God's inclination and the mind of Moses shows itself. God is inclined to grant forgiveness,—Moses inclines to punishment; before, the very opposite seemed to prevail. God is forbearing,—Moses, filled with bitterness; God seeks to glorify his grace,—with Moses, self, not God, comes into prominence. "Must we",—not, "must the Lord",—but "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" We see now, in this prophet, strong at other times, the first plain indications of decay and weariness. He has grown tired (and truly it should not seem strange, for which of us could have sustained a struggle such as his for half the time?) of carrying these stubborn children any longer now. This man, so truly great, has never for an instant hitherto forgotten his own dignity in presence of all Israel; but now, he is no longer master of himself. *J.J. Van Oosterzee.*

Verse 33. *He spake unadvisedly.* A gracious person may be surprised and fall suddenly among thieves that lurk behind the bushes. Nay, very holy men, unless wonderful wary, may be quickly tripped up by sudden questions and unexpected emergencies. Who knows the subtilty of sin, and the deceitfulness of his own heart? Take heed of answering quickly, and send up sudden ejaculations to heaven before you reply to a weighty and doubtful motion. *Samuel Lee.*

Verse 34-38. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those that fetched them out of Egypt; for by that time they were well warm in Canaan, they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostasy.

1. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (Ps 106:34). When they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

2. When they spared them, they promised themselves, that for all this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to destroy the heathen, the next news we hear is, they *were mingled among the heathen*, made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they *learned their works* (Ps 106:35). That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound, than be cured or made sound by it.

3. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees

they learned that too (Ps 106:36). *They served their idols* in the same manner, and with the same rites that they served them; and they became a snare unto them, that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

4. When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods: but they came to that at last (Ps 106:37-38) in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter. *They sacrificed their sons and daughters, pieces of themselves to devils*; and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror; they "shed innocent blood", the most innocent, for it was infant blood, nay, it was the "blood of their sons and their daughters." See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villainy which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly "gives them up to a reprobate mind" (Ro 1:28). *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 37. *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.* We need no better argument to discover the nature of these gods than this very service in my text accepted of them: for both by the record of sacred writ, and relation of heathen authors and other writers, we know that nothing was so usually commanded nor gratefully accepted by these heathenish gods, as was the shedding of man's blood, and the sacrificing of men, maids, and children unto them, as appears by the usual practice of men in former times. From the testimonies of Scripture, I give only the example of the king of Moab, mentioned in 2Ki 3:27, where it is said, that, being in some straits, "He took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall."

The stories likewise of the heathen are full of like examples. When the oracle of Apollo was asked by the Athenians how they might make amends for their killing of Androgens, it willed them to send yearly to king Minos seven bodies of each sex to appease the wrath of god. Now this kind of yearly sacrifice continued still in Athens in the time of Socrates. Thus the Carthaginians, being vanquished by Agathocles, king of Sicily, and supposing their god to be displeased, to appease him did sacrifice two hundred noble men's children. This custom was ancient even before the Trojan war, for then was Iphigenia sacrificed. Thus we read that the Latins sacrificed the tenth of their children to Jupiter; that men and children were usually sacrificed to Saturn in many places in Candia, Rhodomene, Phoenice, Africa, and those commonly the choice and dearest of their children and most nobly descended. The manner of sacrificing their children to Saturn, Diodorus relates to be this: bringing their children to the statue or image of Saturn, which was of huge greatness, they gave them into his hands, which were made so hollow and winding that the children offered slipped and fell down

through into a cave and furnace of fire. These sacrifices continued in use till the birth and death of our Saviour Christ, who came to destroy the work of the devil; for such sacrifices were first forbidden by Augustus Caesar; after more generally by Tiberius (in whose reign our Saviour suffered) who, as Tertullian writes, so straitly forbade them, that he crucified the priests who offered them: howbeit, even in Tertullian's time, and after in Eusebius' and Lactantius' times, such sacrifices were offered (but closely) to Jupiter Latialis.

Who can now doubt, seeing such exceeding superstitious cruelty, but that the gods commanding such sacrifices were very devils and enemies to mankind? God commands no such thing, but forbids it, and threatens plagues to his people, because they had forsaken him and "built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, not spake it, neither came it into my mind" (Jer 19:5). Most infallibly then we may conclude that none but Satan, that arch devil, with his angels, were the commanders of such service, for this agrees right well with his nature, who hath been a murderer from the beginning. *Robert Jenison, in "The Height of Israel's Heathenish Idolatrie, in Sacrificing their Children to the Devil," 1621.*

Verse 37. *Yea, they sacrificed their sons,* etc. From this we learn that inconsiderate zeal is a flimsy pretext in favour of any act of devotion. For by how much the Jews were under the influence of burning zeal, by so much does the prophet convict them of being guilty of greater wickedness; because their madness carried them away to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that they did not spare even their own offspring. Were good intentions meritorious, as idolaters suppose, then indeed the laying aside of all natural affection in sacrificing their own children was a deed deserving the highest praise. But when men act under the impulse of their own capricious humour, the more they occupy themselves with acts of external worship, the more do they increase their guilt. For what difference was there between Abraham and those persons of whom the prophet makes mention, but that the former, under the influence of faith was ready to offer up his son, while the latter, carried away by the impulse of intemperate zeal, cast off all natural affection, and imbrued their hands in the blood of their own offspring. *John Calvin.*

Verse 37. *Devils, Mydv, Shedim.* It appears that children were sacrificed to the deities thus named; that they were considered to be of an angry nature, and inimical to the human race, and thus the object of the homage rendered to them was to avert calamities. The name Mydv may signify either *lord* or *master*, or anything that is *black*, it being derived from an Arabic *Ain Vav* verb—viz., *to be black*, or *to be master*. *John Jahn, in "Biblical Antiquities."*

Verse 37-38. We stand astonished, doubtless, at this horrid, barbarous, and unnatural impiety, of offering children by fire to a Moloch: but how little is it considered, that children, brought up in the ways of ignorance, error, vanity, folly, and vice, are more effectually sacrificed to the great adversary of man kind!—*George Horne.*

Verse 39. *And went a whoring with their own inventions.* As harlotry is one of the most abominable of sins that can be committed by a daughter or a wife; so often in the Scriptures turning from God and especially the practice of idolatry is called whoredom and fornication, Ps 73:27 Ex 34:15-16. *William S. Plumer.*

Verse 40. *He abhorred his own inheritance.* Whenever great love sinks into great hate it is termed *abhorrence.* *Lorinus.*

Verse 43. *They were brought low for their iniquity.* Sin is of a weakening and impoverishing nature; it has weakened all mankind, and taken from them their moral strength to do good; and has brought them to poverty and want; to be beggars on the dunghill; to a pit wherein is no water; and left them in a hopeless and helpless condition; yea, it brings the people of God often times after conversion into a low estate, when God hides his face because of it, temptations are strong, grace is weak, and they become lukewarm and indifferent to spiritual things. *John Gill.*

Verse 46. *He made them also to be pitied of all them that carried them captives.* This improved feeling towards the Jews through God's influence appears in Da 1:9; as Joseph similarly had his captivity improved by God's favour (Ge 39:21). So Evil merodach, King of Babylon, treated kindly Jehoiachin, king of Judah (2Ki 25:27). *A.R. Fausset.*

Verse 47. *Gather us.* Bishop Patrick says that, in his opinion, this verse refers to those, who, in the days of Saul, or before, were taken prisoners by the Philistines, or other nations; whom David prays God to gather to their own land again; that they might worship him in that place which he had prepared for the ark of his presence. *Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 48. *Amen.* Martin Luther said once of the Lord's Prayer that "it was the greatest martyr on earth because it was used so frequently without thought and feeling, without reverence and faith." This quaint remark, as true as it is sad, applies perhaps with still greater force to the word "*Amen.*" Familiar to us from our infancy is the sound of this word, which has found a home wherever the natives have learnt to adore Israel's God and Saviour. It has been adopted, and without translation retained, in all languages in which the gospel of Jesus the Son of David is preached. The literal signification, "So be it", is known to all; yet few consider the deep meaning, the great solemnity, and the abundant consolation treasured up in this word, which has formed for centuries the conclusion of the prayers and praises of God's people. A word which is frequently used without due thoughtfulness, and unaccompanied with the feeling which it is intended to call forth, loses its power from this very familiarity, and though constantly on our lips, lies bedridden in the dormitory of our soul. But it is a great word this word "*Amen*"; and Luther has truly said, "As your Amen is, so has been your prayer." It is a word of venerable history in Israel and in the church. The word dates as far back as the law of Moses. When a solemn oath was pronounced by the priest, the response of the person who was adjured consisted simply of the word "*Amen.*" In like manner the people responded "Amen" when,

from the heights of Ebal and Gerizim, the blessings and the curses of the divine law were pronounced. Again, at the great festival which David made when the ark of God was brought from Obed Edom, the psalm of praise which Asaph and his brethren sang concluded with the words, "Blessed be the Lord. God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen" (1Ch 16:36). Thus we find in the Psalms, not merely that David concludes his psalm of praise with the word *Amen*, but he says, *And let all the people say, Amen.* Adolph Saphir, in "*The Lord's Prayer*," 1870.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Take this verse as the theme of the Psalm, and we shall then see that its exhortation to praise,

1. Is directed to a special people: chosen, redeemed, but sinful, borne with, and forgiven.
2. Is supported by abundant arguments. Man not to be praised, for he sins. God gives in his goodness, and forgives in his mercy, and is therefore to be thanked.
3. Is as applicable now as ever: for our story is a transcript of Israel's.

Verse 2.

1. A challenge.
2. A suggestion: at least let us do what we can.
3. An ambition: in the ages to come we will make known with the church to angels, and all intelligent beings, the mighty acts of divine grace.
4. A question—shall I be there?

Verse 3. The blessedness of a godly life.

Verse 4.

1. The language of Humility: "Remember me, O Lord." Let me not escape thy notice amongst the many millions of creatures under thy care.
2. The language of Faith.
 - (a) That God has a people to whom he shows special favour.
 - (b) That he himself has provided salvation for them.
3. The language of prayer.
 - (a) For the free gift of salvation.
 - (b) For the common salvation—not wishing to be peculiar, but to be as "Thy people", taking them for all in all, both here and hereafter. Walking in the footsteps of the flock.

"Be this my glory, Lord, to be

Joined to thy saints, and near to thee."—*G.R.*

Verses 4, 7, 45. In Ps 106:4, a remembrance desired. In Ps 106:7, a failure of remembrance deplored. In Ps 106:45, a divine remembrance extolled.

Verse 5.

1. The Persons: "Thy chosen"; "Thy nation"; "Thine inheritance."
2. The Privileges: "The good of thy chosen"; "The gladness of thy nation"; "The glory of thine inheritance."
3. The Pleas: "That I may see", etc. They were once as I am: make me what they are now.
(a) My salvation is everything to me. "That I may see," etc. "That I may rejoice", etc. They are many, I am but one. "That I may glory", etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 6. In what respects men may be partakers in the sins of their ancestors.

Verses 7-8.

1. On man's part a darkened understanding, ungrateful forgetfulness, and provocation.
2. On God's part: understanding discovering a reason for mercy; memory mindful of the covenant; patience revealing its power.

Verses 7-8.

1. A special provocation; they murmured at the Red Sea.
2. A special deliverance; "Nevertheless", etc.
3. A special Design; "For his own sake"; "That he might make his power known."—*G.R.*

Verse 8. Salvation by grace a grand display of power.

Verse 8.

"Why are men saved?" See "Spurgeon's Sermons", No. 115.

1. The glorious Saviour, "He."
2. The favoured persons, who are they?
(a) They were a stupid people: "Our fathers understood not", etc., Ps 106:7.
(b) An ungrateful people: "They remembered not", etc., Ps 106:7,13,24, etc.
(c) A provoking people.
3. The reason of salvation: "He saved them for his name's sake." The name of God is his person, his attributes, and his nature. We might, perhaps, include this also: "My name is in him"—that is, in Christ; he saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. He saved them that he might manifest his nature: "God is love." He saved them to vindicate his name.
4. The obstacles removed: "Nevertheless."

Verse 9. *Israel at the Red Sea.* See "Spurgeon's Sermons", No. 72.

1. Israel's three difficulties.
(a) The Red Sea in front of them. This was not put there by an enemy; but by God himself. The Red Sea represents some great and trying providence placed in the path of every newborn child of God, to try his faith, and the sincerity of his trust in God.
(b) The Egyptians behind them,—the representatives of the sins which we thought were dead and

gone. (c) The third difficulty was faint hearts within them.

2. Israel's three helps.

(a) Providence.

(b) Their knowledge that they were the covenant people of God.

(c) The man,—Moses. So the believer's hope and help is in the God man Christ Jesus.

3. God's grand design in it. To give them a thorough baptism into his service, consecrating them for ever to himself (1Co 1-2).

Verse 9. (*second clause*). Dangerous and difficult paths rendered safe and easy by God's leadership.

Verse 11. (*second clause*). Song over sins forgiven.

Verses 12-14. The faith of nature, based on sight, causes transient joy, soon evaporates, dies in utter unbelief, and conducts to greater sin.

Verses 13-15.

1. Mercies are sooner forgotten than trials: "They soon forgot", etc. We write our afflictions on marble, our mercies upon sand.

2. We should wait for God, as well as upon God: "They waited not," etc.

3. Immoderate desire for what we have not of worldly goods, tempts God to deprive us of what we have: Ps 106:14.

4. Prayer may be answered for evil as well as for good: "He gave them their request", then smote them with a plague.

5. Carnal indulgence is inimical to spiritual mindedness: Ps 106:15. Better have a lean body and healthy soul, than a healthy body and leanness of soul. "Poor in this world, rich in faith." There are few of whom it can be said, "I wish thou mayest prosper and be in health," etc. (3Jo 2). *G.R.*

Verse 14. The wickedness of inordinate desires.

1. They are out of place—"in the wilderness."

2. They are assaults upon God—"and tempted God."

3. They are despisers of former mercies—see preceding verses.

4. They involve solemn danger—see following verse.

Verse 16. The sin of envy. Its base nature, its cruel actions its unscrupulous ingratitude, its daring assaults, its abomination before God.

Verse 19. The sinner as an inventor.

Verses 19-22.

1. The Sin remembered.

(a) Idolatry: not forgetting God merely, or disowning him, but setting up an idol in his place.

(b) Idolatry of the worst kind: changing be glory of God into the similitude of an ox, etc.

- (c) The idolatry of Egypt under which they had suffered, and from which they had been delivered.
- (d) Idolatry after many wonderful interpositions of the true God in their behalf.

2. The Remembrance of Sin.

(a) For Humiliation. It was the sin of their fathers.

(b) For self condemnation. "We have sinned with our fathers." It was our nature in them, and it is their nature in us that has committed this great sin.

Verse 23. Moses, the intercessor, a type of our Lord. Carefully study his pleading as recorded in Ex 32:1-35.

Verse 23.

1. Mediation required: "He said that he would destroy them," etc.
2. Mediation offered: "Moses stood before him in the breach."
3. Mediation accepted: "To turn away his wrath", etc. Ex 32:1-35. *G.R.*

Verse 24-26. Murmuring.

1. Arises from despising our mercies.
2. Is fostered by unbelief.
3. Is indulged in all sorts of places.
4. Makes men deaf to the Lord's voice.
5. Provokes great judgments from the Lord.

Verse 24-27.

1. The Rest promised: "The pleasant land."
2. The Refusal of the Rest: "They despised", etc.
3. The Reason of the Refusal: unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief."—*G.R.*

Verse 30-31. The effects of one decisive act for God; immediate, personal, and for posterity.

Verses 32-33.

1. The afflictions of God's people are for the trial of their faith.
2. The trial of their faith is to bring them from dependence upon circumstances to depend upon God himself.
3. The forbearance of God with his people is greater than that of the best of men. *G.R.*

Verse 33.

1. What it is so to speak unadvisedly.
2. What is the great cause of it—"they provoked his spirit."
3. What the results may be.

Verse 34-42.

1. What Israel did not do. They began well, but did not complete the conquest of their foes: Ps 106:34.

2. What they did do: Ps 106:35-39.

(a) They became friendly with them.

(b) They adopted their habits: "learned their works."

(c) They embraced their religion: "served their idols."

(d) They imitated their cruelties; Ps 106:37-38.

(e) They did worse than the heathen (Ps 106:39), they added wicked inventions of their own.

3. What God did to them: Ps 106:40-42. He gave them into the hands of their enemies, and suffered them to be severely oppressed by them. We must either conquer all our foes or be conquered by them. Bring your shield from the battle or be brought home upon it.—*G.R.*

Verse 37. Moloch worship in modern times. Children sacrificed to fashion, wealth, and loveless marriage among the higher classes. Bad example, drinking customs, etc., among the poorer sort. A needful subject.

Verse 44-45. Sin in God's people.

1. Is very provoking to God.

2. Ensures chastisement.

3. Is to be sincerely mourned—"their cry."

4. Will be graciously forgiven, and its effect removed. So the covenant promises.

Verse 47.

1. An earnest Prayer: "Save us, O Lord", etc.

2. A Believing Prayer: "O Lord *our* God."

3. A humble Prayer: "Gather us from among the heathen."

4. A sincere Prayer: "To give thanks unto thy holy name"; to own thy justice and holiness in all thy ways.

5. A confident Prayer: "To triumph in thy praise." None but bruised spices give forth such odours.—*G.R.*

Verse 48.

1. God is to be praised as the "God of Israel."

(a) Of typical Israel.

(b) Of the true Israel.

2. He is to be praised as the God of Israel under all circumstances: for his judgments as well as for his mercies.

3. At all times: "From everlasting to everlasting."

4. By all people: "Let all the people say, Amen."

5. As the beginning and end of every song: "Praise ye the Lord."—*G.R.*

Verse 48. *Let all the people say, Amen.* The exhortation to universal praise. All men are indebted to

the Lord, all have sinned, all hear the gospel, all his people are saved. Unanimity in praise is pleasant, and promotes unity in other matters.

Psalm 107

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

SUBJECT. This is a choice song for the redeemed of the Lord (Ps 107:2). Although it celebrates providential deliverances, and therefore may be sung by any man whose life has been preserved in time of danger; yet under cover of this, it mainly magnifies the Lord for spiritual blessings, of which temporal favours are but types arid shadows. The theme is thanksgiving, and the motives for it. The construction of the psalm is highly poetical, and merely as a composition it would be hard to find its compeer among human productions. The bards of the Bible hold no second place among the sons of song.

DIVISION. The psalmist commences by dedicating his poem to the redeemed who have been gathered from captivity, Ps 107:1-3; he then likens their history to that of travellers lost in the desert, Ps 107:4-9; to that of prisoners in iron bondage, Ps 107:10-16; to that of sick men, Ps 107:17-22; and to that of mariners tossed with tempest, Ps 107:23-32. In the closing verses the judgment of God on the rebellious, and the mercies of God to his own afflicted people are made the burden of the song, Ps 107:33-42; and then the psalm closes with a sort of summing up, in Ps 107:43, which declares that those who study the works and ways of the Lord shall be sure to see and praise his goodness.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.* It is all we can give him, and the least we can give; therefore let us diligently render to him our thanksgiving. The psalmist is in earnest in the exhortation, hence the use of the interjection "O", to intensity his words: let us be at all times thoroughly fervent in the praises of the Lord, both with our lips and with our lives, by thanksgiving and thanks living. JEHOVAH, for that is the name here used, is not to be worshipped with groans and cries, but with thanks, for he is good; and these thanks should be heartily rendered, for his is no common goodness: he is good by nature, and essence, and proven to be good in all the acts of his eternity. Compared with him there is none good, no, not one: but he is essentially, perpetually, superlatively, infinitely good. We are the perpetual partakers of his goodness, and therefore ought above all his creatures to magnify his name. Our praise should be increased by the fact that the

divine goodness is not a transient thing, but in the attribute of mercy abides for ever the same, for his mercy endureth for ever. The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, "*for his mercy forever.*" That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end. Our sin required that goodness should display itself to us in the form of mercy, and it has done so, and will do so evermore; let us not be slack in praising the goodness which thus adapts itself to our fallen nature.

Verse 2. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.* Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed have overwhelming reasons for declaring the goodness of the Lord. Theirs is a peculiar redemption, and for it they ought to render peculiar praise. The Redeemer is so glorious, the ransom price so immense, and the redemption so complete, that they are under sevenfold obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and to exhort others to do so. Let them not only feel so but say so; let them both sing and bid their fellows sing. Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. Snatched by superior power away from fierce oppressions, they are bound above all men to adore the Lord, their Liberator. Theirs is a divine redemption, "he hath redeemed" them, and no one else has done it. His own unaided arm has wrought out their deliverance. Should not emancipated slaves be grateful to the hand which set them free? What gratitude can suffice for a deliverance from the power of sin, death, and hell? In heaven itself there is no sweeter hymn than that whose burden is, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

Verse 3. *And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.* Gathering follows upon redeeming. The captives of old were restored to their own land from every quarter of the earth, and even from beyond the sea; for the word translated *south* is really *the sea*. No matter what divides, the Lord will gather his own into one body, and first on earth by "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism", and then in heaven by one common bliss they shall be known to be the one people of the One God. What a glorious Shepherd must, he be who thus collects the blood bought flock from the remotest regions, guides them through countless perils, and at last makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Paradise. Some have wandered one way and some another they have all left Immanuel's land and strayed as far as they could, and great are the grace and power by which they are all collected into one flock by the Lord Jesus. With one heart and voice let the redeemed praise the Lord who gathers them into one.

Verse 4. *They wandered in the wilderness.* They *wandered*, for the track was lost, no vestige of a road remained; worse still, they wandered *in a wilderness*, where all around was burning sand. They were lost in the worst possible place, even as the sinner is who is lost in sin; they wandered up and down in vain searches and researches as a sinner does when he is awakened and sees his lost estate; but it ended in nothing, for they still continued in the wilderness, though they had hoped to escape from it. In a solitary way. No dwelling of man was near, and no other company of travellers

passed within hail. Solitude is a great intensifier of misery. The loneliness of a desert has a most depressing influence upon the man who is lost in the boundless waste. The traveller's way in the wilderness is a *waste way*, and when he leaves even that poor, barren trail, to get utterly beyond the path of man, he is in a wretched plight indeed. A soul without sympathy is on the borders of hell: a solitary way is the way of despair. They found no city to dwell in. How could they? There was none. Israel in the wilderness abode under canvas, and enjoyed none of the comforts of settled life; wanderers in the Sahara find no town or village. Men when under distress of soul find nothing to rest upon, no comfort and no peace; their efforts after salvation are many, weary, and disappointing, and the dread solitude of their hearts fills them with dire distress.

Verse 5. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.* The spirits sink when the bodily frame becomes exhausted by long privations. Who can keep his courage up when he is ready to fall to the ground at every step through utter exhaustion? The supply of food is all eaten, the water is spent in the bottles, and there are neither fields nor streams in the desert, the heart therefore sinks in dire despair. Such is the condition of an awakened conscience before it knows the Lord Jesus; it is full of unsatisfied cravings, painful needs, and heavy fears. It is utterly spent and without strength, and there is nothing in the whole creation which can minister to its refreshment.

Verse 6. *Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble.* Not till they were in extremities did they pray, but the mercy is that they prayed *then*, and prayed in the right manner, with a *cry*, and to the right person, even *to the Lord*. Nothing else remained for them to do; they could not help themselves, or find help in others, and therefore they cried to God. Supplications which are forced out of us by stern necessity are none the less acceptable with God; but, indeed, they have all the more prevalence, since they are evidently sincere, and make a powerful appeal to the divine pity. Some men will never pray till they are half starved, and for their best interests it is far better for them to be empty and faint than to be full and stouthearted. If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joys; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty, And he delivered them out of their distresses. Deliverance follows prayer most surely. The cry must have been very feeble, for they were faint, and their faith was as weak as their cry; but yet they were heard, and heard at once. A little delay would have been their death: but there was none, for the Lord was ready to save them. The Lord delights to come in when no one else can be of the slightest avail. The case was hopeless till Jehovah interposed, and then all was changed immediately; the people were shut up, straitened, and almost pressed to death, but enlargement came to them at once when they began to remember their God, and look to him in prayer. Those deserve to die of hunger who will not so much as ask for bread, and he who being lost in a desert will not beg the aid of a guide cannot be pitied even if he perish in the wilds and feed the vultures with his flesh.

Verse 7. *And he led them forth by the right way.* There are many wrong ways, but only one right one, and into this none can lead us but God himself. When the Lord is leader the way is sure to be right; we never need question that. Forth from the pathless mazes of the desert he conducted the lost ones; he found the way, made the way, and enabled them to walk along it, faint and hungry as they were. That they might go to a city of habitation. The end was worthy of the way: he did not lead them from one desert to another, but he gave the wanderers an abode, the weary ones a place of rest. *They* found no city to dwell in, but *he* found one readily enough. What *we* can do and what *God* can do are two very different things. What a difference it made to them to leave their solitude for a city, their trackless path for well frequented streets, and their faintness of heart for the refreshment of a home! Far greater are the changes which divine love works in the condition of sinners when God answers their prayers and brings them to Jesus. Shall not the Lord be magnified for such special mercies? Can we who have enjoyed them sit down in ungrateful silence?

Verse 8. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness.* Men are not mentioned here in the original, but the word is fitly supplied by the translators; the psalmist would have all things in existence magnify Jehovah's name. Surely *men* will do this without being exhorted to it when the deliverance is fresh in their memories. They must be horrible ingrates who will not honour such a deliverer for so happy a rescue from the most cruel death. It is well that the redeemed should be stirred up to bless the Lord again and again, for preserved life deserves life long thankfulness. Even those who have not encountered the like peril, and obtained the like deliverance, should bless the Lord in sympathy with their fellows, sharing their joy. And for his wonderful works to the children of men. These favours are bestowed upon *our* race, upon children of the family to which we belong, and therefore we ought to join in the praise. The children of men are so insignificant, so feeble, and so undeserving, that it is a great wonder that the Lord should do anything for them; but he is not content with doing little works, he puts forth his wisdom, power, and love to perform marvels on the behalf of those who seek him. In the life of each one of the redeemed there is a world of wonders, and therefore from each there should resound a world of praises. As to the marvels of grace which the Lord has wrought for his church as a whole there is no estimating them, they are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are high above the earth. When shall the day dawn when the favoured race of man shall be as devoted to the praise of God as they are distinguished by the favour of God?

Verse 9. *For he satisfieth the longing soul.* This is the summary of the lost traveller's experience. He who in a natural sense has been rescued from perishing in a howling wilderness ought to bless the Lord who brings him again to eat bread among men. The spiritual sense is, however, the more rich in instruction. The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us. That longing leads us into solitude, separation, thirst, faintness and self despair, and all these conduct us to prayer, faith, divine guidance, satisfying of the soul's thirst, and rest: the good hand of the Lord is to be seen in the whole

process and in the divine result. And filleth the hungry soul with goodness. As for thirst he gives satisfaction, so for hunger he supplies filling. In both cases the need is more than met, there is an abundance in the supply which is well worthy of notice: the Lord does nothing in a niggardly fashion; satisfying and filling are his peculiar modes of treating his guests; none who come under the Lord's providing ever complain of short commons. Nor does he fill the hungry with common fare, but with *goodness* itself. It is not so much good, as the essence of goodness which he bestows on needy suppliants. Shall man be thus royally supplied and return no praise for the largeness of love? It must not be so. We will even now give thanks with all the redeemed church, and pray for the time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory.

Verse 10. *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.* The cell is dark of itself, and the fear of execution casts a still denser gloom over the prison. Such is the cruelty of man to man that tens of thousands have been made to linger in places only fit to be tombs; unhealthy, suffocating, filthy sepulchres, where they have sickened and died of broken hearts. Meanwhile the dread of sudden death has been the most hideous part of the punishment; the prisoners have felt as if the chill shade of death himself froze them to the very marrow. The state of a soul under conviction of sin is forcibly symbolized by such a condition; persons in that state cannot see the promises which would yield them comfort, they sit still in the inactivity of despair, they fear the approach of judgment, and are thereby as much distressed as if they were at death's door. Being bound in affliction and iron. Many prisoners have been thus doubly fettered in heart and hand; or the text may mean that affliction becomes as an iron band to them, or that the iron chains caused them great affliction. None know these things but those who have felt them; we should prize our liberty more if we knew by actual experience what manacles and fetters mean. In a spiritual sense affliction frequently attends conviction of sin, and then the double grief causes a double bondage. In such cases the iron enters into the soul, the poor captives cannot stir because of their bonds, cannot rise to hope because of their grief, and have no power because of their despair. Misery is the companion of all those who are shut up and cannot come forth. O ye who are made free by Christ Jesus, remember those who are in bonds.

Verse 11. *Because they rebelled against the words of God.* This was the general cause of bondage among the ancient people of God, they were given over to their adversaries because they were not loyal to the Lord. God's words are not to be trifled with, and those who venture on such rebellion will bring themselves into bondage. And contemned the counsel of the Most High. They thought that they knew better than the Judge of all the earth, and therefore they left his ways and walked in their own. When men do not follow the divine counsel they give the most practical proof of their contempt for it. Those who will not be bound by God's law will, ere long, be bound by the fetters of judgment. There is too much contemning of the divine counsel, even among Christians, and hence so few of them know

the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

Verse 12. *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.* In eastern prisons men are frequently made to labour like beasts of the field. As they have no liberty, so they have no rest. This soon subdues the stoutest heart, and makes the proud boaster sing another tune. Trouble and hard toil are enough to tame a lion. God has methods of abating the loftiness of rebellious looks; the cell and the mill make even giants tremble. They fell down, and there was none to help. Stumbling on in the dark beneath their weary task, they at last fell prone upon the ground, but no one came to pity them or to lift them up. Their fall might be fatal for aught that any man cared about them; their misery was unseen, or, if observed, no one could interfere between them and their tyrant masters. In such a wretched plight the rebellious Israelite became more lowly in mind, and thought more tenderly of his God and of his offences against him. When a soul finds all its efforts at self salvation prove abortive, and feels that it is now utterly without strength, then the Lord is at work hiding pride from man and preparing the afflicted one to receive his mercy. The spiritual case which is here figuratively described is desperate, and therefore affords the finer field for the divine interposition; some of us remember well how brightly mercy shone in our prison, and what music the fetters made when they fell off from our hands. Nothing but the Lord's love could have delivered us; without it we must have utterly perished.

Verse 13. *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.* Not a prayer till then. While there was any to help below they would not look above. No cries till their hearts were brought down and their hopes were all dead—*then* they cried, but not before. So many a man offers what he calls prayer when he is in good case and thinks well of himself, but in very deed the only real cry to God is that which is forced out of him by a sense of utter helplessness and misery. We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness. And he saved them out of their distresses. Speedily and willingly he sent relief. They were long before they cried, but he was not long before he saved. They had applied everywhere else before they came to him, but when they did address themselves to him, they were welcome at once. He who saved men in the open wilderness can also save in the close prison: bolts and bars cannot shut him out, nor long shut in his redeemed ones.

Verse 14. *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death.* The Lord in providence fetches out prisoners from their cells and bids them breathe the sweet fresh air again, and then he takes off their fetters, and gives liberty to their aching limbs. So also he frees men from care and trouble, and especially from the misery and slavery of sin. This he does with his own hand, for in the experience of all the saints it is certified that there is no jail delivery unless by the Judge himself. And brake their bands in sunder. Set them free by force, so liberating them that they could not be chained again, for he had broken the manacles to pieces. The Lord's deliverances are of the most complete and triumphant kind, he neither leaves the soul in darkness nor in bonds, nor does he permit the powers

of evil again to enthrall the liberated captive. What he does is done for ever. Glory be to his name.

Verse 15. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.* The sight of such goodness makes a right minded man long to see the Lord duly honoured for his amazing mercy. When dungeon doors fly open, and chains are snapped, who can refuse to adore the glorious goodness of the Lord? It makes the heart sick to think of such gracious mercies remaining unsung: we cannot but plead with men to remember their obligations and extol the Lord their God.

Verse 16. *For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of Zion in sunder.* This verse belongs to that which precedes it, and Sums up the mercy experienced by captives. The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners: and spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made us free indeed. Brass and iron are as tow before the flame of Jesus' love. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us, neither shall the bars of the grave detain us. Those of us who have experienced his redeeming power must and will praise the Lord for the wonders of his grace displayed on our behalf.

Verse 17. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.* Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Thoughtless and lustful men by drunkenness, gluttony, and the indulgence of their passions fill their bodies with diseases of the worst kind. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness: men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still; and if they were brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet would not their folly depart from them. From one transgression they go on to many iniquities, and while under the rod they add sin to sin. Alas, even the Lord's own people sometimes play the fool in this sad manner.

Verse 18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.* Appetite departs from men when they are sick: the best of food is nauseous to them, their stomach turns against it. And they draw near unto the gates of death. From want of food, and from the destructive power of their malady, they slide gradually down till they lie at the door of the grave; neither does the skill of the physician suffice to stay their downward progress. As they cannot eat there is no support given to the system, and as the disease rages their little strength is spent in pain and misery. Thus it is with souls afflicted with a sense of sin, they cannot find comfort in the choicest promises, but turn away with loathing even from the gospel, so that they gradually decay into the grave of despair. The mercy is that though near the gates of death they are not yet inside the sepulchre.

Verse 19. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble.* They join the praying legion at last. Saul also is among the prophets. The fool lays aside his motley in prospect of the shroud, and betakes himself to his knees. What a cure for the soul sickness of body is often made to be by the Lord's grace! And

he saveth them out of their distresses. Prayer is as effectual on a sick bed as in the wilderness or in prison; it may be tried in all places and circumstances with certain result. We may pray about our bodily pains and weaknesses, and we may look for answers too. When we have no appetite for meat we may have an appetite for prayer. He who cannot feed on the word of God may yet turn to God himself and find mercy.

Verse 20. *He sent his word and healed them.* Man is not healed by medicine alone, but by the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God is man restored from going down to the grave. A word will do it, a word has done it thousands of times. And delivered them from their destructions. They escape though dangers had surrounded them, dangers many and deadly. The word of the Lord has a great delivering power; he has but to speak and the armies of death flee in an instant. Sin sick souls should remember the power of *the Word*, and be much in hearing it and meditating upon it. Spiritually considered, these verses describe a sin sick soul: foolish but yet aroused to a sense of guilt, it refuses comfort from any and every quarter, and a lethargy of despair utterly paralyzes it. To its own apprehension nothing remains but utter destruction in many forms: the gates of death stand open before it, and it is, in its own apprehension, hurried in that direction. Then is the soul driven to cry in the bitterness of its grief unto the Lord, and Christ, the eternal Word, comes with healing power in the direst extremity, saving to the uttermost.

Verse 21. *Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.* It is marvellous that men can be restored from sickness and yet refuse to bless the Lord. It would seem impossible that they should forget such great mercy, for we should expect to see both themselves and the friends to whom they are restored uniting in a lifelong act of thanksgiving. Yet when ten are healed it is seldom that more than one returns to give glory to God. Alas, where are the nine? When a spiritual cure is wrought by the great Physician, praise is one of the surest signs of renewed health. A mind rescued from the disease of sin and the weary pains of conviction, must and will adore Jehovah Rophi, the healing God: yet it were well if there were a thousand times as much even of this.

Verse 22. *And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving.* In such a case let there be gifts and oblations as well as words. Let the good Physician have his fee of gratitude. Let life become a sacrifice to him who has prolonged it, let the deed of self denying gratitude be repeated again and again: there must be many cheerful sacrifices to celebrate the marvellous boon. And declare his works with rejoicing. Such things are worth telling, for the personal declaration honours God, relieves ourselves, comforts others, and puts all men in possession of facts concerning the divine goodness which they will not be able to ignore.

Verse 23. *They that go down to the sea in ships.* Navigation was so little practised among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high mystery, and their craft was looked upon as one of

singular daring degree of and peril. Tales of the sea thrilled all hearts with awe, and he who had been to Ophir or to Tarshish and had returned alive was looked upon as a man of renown, an ancient mariner to be listened to with reverent attention. Voyages were looked on as descending to an abyss, "going down to the sea in ships"; whereas now our bolder and more accustomed sailors talk of the "high seas." That do business in great waters. If they had not had business to do, they would never have ventured on the ocean, for we never read in the Scriptures of any man taking his pleasure on the sea: so averse was the Israelitish mind to seafaring, that we do not hear of even Solomon himself keeping a pleasure boat. The Mediterranean was "the great sea" to David and his countrymen, and they viewed those who had business upon it with no small degree of admiration.

Verse 24. *These see the works of the LORD.* Beyond the dwellers on the land they see the Lord's greatest works, or at least such as stayers at home judge to be so when they hear the report thereof. Instead of the ocean proving to be a watery wilderness, it is full of God's creatures, and if we were to attempt to escape from his presence by flying to the uttermost parts of it, we should only rush into Jehovah's arms, and find ourselves in the very centre of his workshop. And his wonders in the deep. They see wonders in it and on it. It is in itself a wonder and it swarms with wonders. Seamen, because they have fewer objects around them, are more observant of those they have than landsmen are, and hence they are said to see the wonders in the deep. At the same time, the ocean really does contain many of the more striking of God's creatures, and it is the scene of many of the more tremendous of the physical phenomena by which the power and more majesty of the Lord are revealed among men. The chief wonders alluded to by the Psalmist are a sudden storm and the calm which follows it. All believers have not the same deep experience; but for wise ends, that they may do business for him, the Lord sends some of his saints to the sea of soul trouble, and there they see, as others do not, the wonders of divine grace. Sailing over the deeps of inward depravity, the waste waters of poverty, the billows of persecution, and the rough waves of temptation, they need God above all others, and they find him.

Verse 25. *For he commandeth:* his word is enough for anything, he has but to will it and the tempest rages. And raiseth the stormy wiled. It seemed to he asleep before, but it knows its Master's bidding, and is up at once in all its fury. Which lifteth up the waves thereof. The glassy surface of the sea is broken, and myriads of white heads appear and rage and toss themselves to and fro as the wind blows upon them. Whereas they were lying down in quiet before, the waves rise in their might and leap towards the sky as soon as the howling of the wind awakens them. Thus it needs but a word from God and the soul is in troubled waters, tossed to and fro with a thousand afflictions. Doubts, fears, terrors, anxieties lift their heads like so many angry waves, when once the Lord allows the storm winds to beat upon us.

Verse 26. *They mount up to the heaven.* Borne aloft on the crest of the wave, the sailors and their

vessels appear to climb the skies, but it is only for a moment, for very soon in the trough of the sea they go down again to the depths. As if their vessel were but a sea bird, the mariners are tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billow's crown." Their soul is melted because of trouble. Weary, wet, dispirited, hopeless of escape, their heart is turned to water, and they seem to have no manhood left. Those who have been on the spiritual deep in one of the great storms which occasionally agitate the soul know what this verse means. In these spiritual cyclones presumption alternates with despair, indifference with agony! No heart is left for anything, courage is gone, hope is almost dead. Such an experience is as real as the tossing of a literal tempest and far more painful. Some of us have weathered many such an internal hurricane, and have indeed seen the Lord's wondrous works.

Verse 27. *They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man.* The violent motion of the vessel prevents their keeping their legs, and their fears drive them out of all power to use their brains, and therefore they look like intoxicated men. And are at their wit's end. What more can they do? They have used every expedient known to navigation, but the ship is so strained and beaten about that they know not how to keep her afloat. Here too the spiritual mariner's log agrees with that of the sailor on the sea. We have staggered frightfully! We could stand to nothing and hold by nothing. We knew not what to do, and could have done nothing if we had known it. We were as men distracted, and felt as if destruction itself would be better than our horrible state of suspense. As for wit and wisdom, they were clean washed out of us, we felt ourselves to be at a nonplus altogether.

Verse 28. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble.* Though at their wit's end, they had wit enough to pray; their heart was melted, and it ran out in cries for help. This was well and ended well, for it is written, And he brought them out of their distresses. Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray staggering and reeling, and pray when we are at our wit's end. God will hear us amid the thunder and answer us out of the storm. He brought their distresses upon the mariners, and therefore they did well to turn to him for the removal of them; nor did they look in vain.

Verse 29. *He maketh the storm a calm.* He reveals his power in the sudden and marvellous transformations which occur at his bidding. He commanded the storm and now he ordains a calm: God is in all natural phenomena, and we do well to recognise his working. So that the waves thereof are still. They bow in silence at his feet. Where huge billows leaped aloft there is scarce a ripple to be seen. When God makes peace it is peace indeed, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. He can in an instant change the condition of a man's mind, so that it shall seem an absolute miracle to him that he has passed so suddenly from hurricane to calm. O that the Lord would thus work in the reader, should his heart be storm beaten with outward troubles or inward fears. Lord, say the word and peace will come at once.

Verse 30. *Then are they glad because they be quiet.* No one can appreciate this verse unless he has

been in a storm at sea. No music can be sweeter than the rattling of the chain as the shipmen let down the anchor; and no place seems more desirable than the little cove, or the wide bay, in which the ship rests in peace. So he bringeth them unto their desired haven. The rougher the voyage the more the mariners long for port, and heaven becomes more and more "a desired haven", as our trials multiply. By storms and by favourable breezes, though tempest and fair weather, the great Pilot and Ruler of the sea brings mariners to port, and his people to heaven. HE must have the glory of the successful voyage of time, and when we are moored in the river of life above we shall take care that his praises are not forgotten. We should long ago have been wrecked if it had not been for his preserving hand, and our only hope of outliving the storms of the future is based upon his wisdom, faithfulness and power. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.

Verse 31. *Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* Let the sea sound forth Jehovah's praises because of his delivering grace. As the sailor touches the shore let him lift the solemn hymn to heaven, and let others who see him rescued from the jaws of death unite in his thanksgiving.

Verse 32. *Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people.* Thanks for such mercies should be given in public in the place where men congregate for worship. And praise him in the assembly of the elders. The praise should be presented with great solemnity in the presence of men of years, experience, and influence. High and weighty service should be rendered for great and distinguished favours, and therefore let the sacrifice be presented with due decorum and with grave seriousness. Often when men hear of a narrow escape from shipwreck they pass over the matter with a careless remark about good luck, but it should never be thus jested with. When a heart has been in great spiritual storms and has at last found peace, there will follow as a duty and a privilege the acknowledgment of the Lord's mercy before his people, and it is well that this should be done in the presence of those who hold office in the church, and who from their riper years are better able to appreciate the testimony.

Verse 33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground.* When the Lord deals with rebellious men he can soon deprive them of those blessings of which they feel most assured: their rivers and perennial springs they look upon as certain never to be taken from them, but the Lord at a word can deprive them even of these. In hot climates after long droughts streams of water utterly fail, and even springs cease to flow, and this also has happened in other parts of the world when great convulsions of the earth's surface have occurred. In providence this physical catastrophe finds its counterpart when business ceases to yield profit and sources of wealth are made to fail; as also when health and strength are taken away, when friendly aids are withdrawn, and comfortable associations are broken up. So, too, in soul matters, the most prosperous ministries may

become dry, the most delightful meditations cease to benefit us, and the most fruitful religious exercises grow void of the refreshment of grace which they formerly yielded. Since

"It is God who lifts our comforts high,

Or sinks them in the grave",

it behooves us to walk before him with reverential gratitude, and so to live that it may not become imperative upon him to afflict us.

Verse 34. *A fruitful land into barrenness.* This has been done in many instances, and notably in the case of the psalmist's own country, which was once the glory of all lands and is now almost a desert. For the wickedness of them that dwell therein. Sin is at the bottom of sorrow. It first made the ground sterile in father Adam's day, and it continues to have a blighting effect upon all that it touches. If we have not the salt of holiness we shall soon receive the salt of barrenness, for the text in the Hebrew is—"a fruitful land into saltness." If we will not yield the Lord a harvest of obedience he may forbid the soil to yield us a harvest of bread, and what then? If we turn good into evil can we wonder if the Lord pays us in kind, and returns our baseness into our own bosoms? Many a barren church owes its present sad estate to its inconsistent behaviour, and many a barren Christian has come into this mournful condition by a careless, unsanctified walk before the Lord. Let not saints who are now useful run the risk of enduring the loss of their mercies, but let them be watchful that all things may go well with them.

Verse 35. *He turneth the wilderness into a standing water.* With another turn of his hand he more than restores that which in judgment he took away. He does his work of mercy on a royal scale, for a deep lake is seen where before there was only a sandy waste. It is not by natural laws, working by some innate force, that this wonder is wrought, but by himself—HE TURNETH. And dry ground into watersprings. Continuance, abundance, and perpetual freshness are all implied in watersprings, and these are created where all was dry. This wonder of mercy is the precise reversal of the deed of judgment, and wrought by the selfsame hand. Even thus in the church, and in each individual saint, the mercy of the Lord soon works wonderful changes where restoring and renewing grace begin their benign work. O that we might see this verse fulfilled in all around us, and within our own hearts: then would these words serve us for an exclamation of grateful astonishment, and a song of well deserved praise.

Verse 36. *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, where none could dwell before.* They will appreciate the change and prize his grace; as the barrenness of the land caused their hunger so will its fertility banish it for ever, and they will settle down a happy and thankful people to bless God for every handful of corn which the land yields to them. None are so ready to return a revenue of praise to God for great mercies as those who have known the lack of them. Hungry souls make sweet music when the Lord fills them with his gracious gifts. Are we hungry? Or are we satisfied with the husks of

this poor, swinish world? That they may prepare a city for habitation. When the earth is watered and men cultivate it, cities spring up and teem with inhabitants; when grace abounds where sin formerly reigned, hearts find peace and dwell in God's love as in a strong city. The church is built up where once all was a waste when the Lord causes the broad rivers and streams of gospel grace to flow forth.

Verse 37. *And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.* Men work when God works. His blessing encourages the sower, cheers the planter, and rewards the labourer. Not only necessaries but luxuries are enjoyed, wine as well as corn, when the heavens are caused to yield the needed rain to fill the watercourses. Divine visitations bring great spiritual riches, foster varied works of faith and labours of love, and cause every good fruit to abound to our comfort and to God's praise. When God sends the blessing it does not supersede, but encourages and develops human exertion. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.

Verse 38. *He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.* God's blessing is everything. It not only makes men happy, but it makes men themselves, by causing men to be multiplied upon the earth. When the Lord made the first pair he blessed them and said "be fruitful and multiply", and here he restores the primeval blessing. Observe that beasts as well as men fare well when God favours his people: they share with men in the goodness or severity of divine providence. Plagues and pests are warded off from the flock and the herd when the Lord means well towards a people; but when chastisement is intended, the flocks and herds rot from off the face of the earth. O that nations in the day of their prosperity would but own the gracious hand of God, for it is to his blessing that they owe their all.

Verse 39. *Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.* As they change in character, so do their circumstances alter. Under the old dispensation, this was very clearly to be observed; Israel's ups and downs were the direct consequences of her sins and repentance. Trials are of various kinds; here we have three words for affliction, and there are numbers more: God has many rods and we have many smarts; and all because we have many sins. Nations and churches soon diminish in number when they are diminished in grace. If we are low in love to God, it is small wonder that he brings us low in other respects. God can reverse the order of our prosperity, and give us a *diminuendo* where we had a *crescendo*; therefore let us walk before him with great tenderness of spirit, conscious of our dependence upon his smile.

Verses 40-41. In these two verses we see how the Lord at will turns the wheel of providence. Paying no respect to man's imaginary grandeur, he puts princes down and makes them wander in banishment as they had made their captives wander when they drove them from land to land: at the same time, having ever a tender regard for the poor and needy, the Lord delivers the distressed and sets them in a position of comfort and happiness. This is to be seen upon the roll of history again and

again, and in spiritual experience we remark its counterpart: the self sufficient are made to despise themselves and search in vain for help in the wilderness of their nature, while poor convicted souls are added to the Lord's family and dwell in safety as the sheep of his fold.

Verse 42. *The righteous shall see it, and rejoice.* Divine providence causes joy to God's true people; they see the hand of the Lord in all things, and delight to study the ways of his justice and of his grace. And all iniquity shall stop her mouth. What can she say? God's providence is often so conclusive in its arguments of fact, that there is no replying or questioning. It is not long that the impudence of ungodliness can be quiet, but when God's judgments are abroad it is driven to hold its tongue.

Verse 43. Those who notice providence shall never be long without a providence notice. It is wise to observe what the Lord doth, for he is wonderful in counsel; has given us eyes to see with, and it is foolish to close them when there is most to observe; but we must observe wisely, otherwise we may soon confuse ourselves and others with hasty reflections upon the dealings of the Lord. In a thousand ways the lovingkindness of the Lord is shown, and if we will prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it. To understand the delightful attribute of lovingkindness is an attainment as pleasant it is profitable: those who are proficient scholars in this art will be among sweetest singers to the glory of Jehovah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Dr. Lowth, in his 20th prelection, remarks of this psalm:—No doubt the composition of this psalm is admirable throughout; and the descriptive part of it adds at least its share of beauty to the whole; but what is but most to be admired is its *conciseness*, and withal the expressiveness of the diction, which strikes the imagination with inimitable elegance. The *weary and bewildered traveller*, the miserable *captive* in the hideous dungeon, the sick dying man, the *seaman foundering* in a storm, are described in so affecting manner, that they far exceed anything of the kind, though never so laboured. I may add that had such an Idyle appeared in Theocritus or Virgil or had it been found as a scene in any of the Greek tragedians, even in Aeschylus himself, it would probably have been produced as their master piece.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm. I do not believe that the special care of God over his own people is here rather *indirectly* than *directly* touched upon, and that therefore this Psalm is composed to illustrate the general care of God:

1. Because the subjects of the various deliverances are called *the redeemed of Jehovah*, Ps 107:2, which is the customary title of the people of God.
2. Because among the instances given, there are those which are peculiar to the people of God, as in Ps 107:3 the return of the dispersed out of every part of the globe, a singular blessing, promised in

the prophecies to the people of God, see Ps 106:47.

3. The sick of Ps 106:17 are those who are spiritually sick even unto death, as is clear from the fact of their being healed by the *word* of God; which is not in the order of common providence. The *imprisoned* of Ps 107:2 are those who on account of the worship of God fall into the power of their enemies, you cannot well apply to any other than the people of God. If you understand the *wicked*, for others among the heathen cannot be said to be thrust into prison on account of the violation of the laws, then the *liberation* belongs not to them.

4. *Calling* upon God, especially upon *Jehovah*, under name He was known only to his people, you cannot apply unless in a diluted and partial sense to those who are afflicted in the general cause of providence.

5. He commands those who are delivered to celebrate the divine goodness in *the congregation of the people and the assembly of the elders*, Ps 107:32, which is the mark of the true Church and her usual description.

6. Lastly, instances of general providences are not wont to come under the name of *dox, grace*, by which these deliverances are described, not do they require such great and such careful attention in their consideration, as here the sacred poet enjoins upon the pious and the wise: such things are easily observed, and are of every day occurrence.—*Venema*.

Whole Psalm. The psalm divides itself into five parts; the four first, as it should seem, describing four divisions of the returning Israelites, and recounting the particular accidents that had befallen each party on their journey, and the particular mercies for which they ought to be thankful. The fifth part describes what befalls the collected nations, or a part of them, when they arrive at the land which was the object of their journey—I think the first restoration or colonization before the general gathering. Whether the four divisions of travellers are supposed to come exactly from the four distinct quarters of the earth, perhaps is not quite certain. The first divisions are plainly described (Ps 107:4-5), as coming across the desert, and meeting with all the disasters usual on that route.—*John Fry*.

Whole Psalm. Without insisting on an exclusive application of this psalm to Israel, there may be traced, I think, not indistinctly, the leading incidents of the nation's changeful experience in the descriptive language of the narrative part. In Ps 107:4-7 the story of the wilderness is briefly told, to the praise of the glory of his grace who satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. The strong discipline of national affliction which visited the rebellious house, until the turning again of their captivity, when the appointed term of Babylonish exile was accomplished, appears to form the historical groundwork of Ps 107:10-16; but in its prophetic intention this passage would demand a far wider interpretation. The resuscitation of Israel, both spiritually and politically, would alone adequately fulfil these words. The sufferings of the "foolish nation" when, filled with Jehovah's indignation they find a snare in that which should have fed them, and pine beneath the

pressure of a more grievous famine than that of bread, until, in answer to their cry of sorrow, the word of saving health is sent them from above, seem to be indicated in the next division (Ps 107:17-20). The language of Ps 107:22 is in agreement with this. They who had daily gone about to establish their own righteousness are called on now to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and to declare his works with singing. Besides the obvious force and beauty of the following verses (Ps 107:23-30) in their simple meaning and their general application, we have, I believe, a figure of Jacob's restless trouble when, like a vexed and frightened mariner, he wandered up and down the wide sea of nations without ease, a friendless pilgrim of the Lord's displeasure, until the long desired rest was gained at last, under the faithful guidance of him who seeks his people in the dark and cloudy day. Accordingly we find in the hortatory reminder of praise which follows (Ps 107:32), a mention of the gathered people and their elders, who are now called on to celebrate, in the quiet resting places of Immanuel's land, his faithful goodness and his might, who had turned their long endured tempest of affliction to the calm sunshine of perpetual peace.—*Arthur Pridham, in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms", 1869.*

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD.* Unto no duty are we more dull and untoward, than to the praise of God, and thanksgiving unto him; neither is there any duty whereunto there is more need that we should be stirred up, as this earnest exhortation doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1. *For he is good,* etc. The first words of the psalm are abundant in thought concerning Jehovah. "*For he is good.*" Is not this the Old Testament version of "God is love"? 1Jo 4:8. And then, *For his mercy endureth for ever.* Is not this the gushing stream from the fountain of Love?—the never failing stream, on whose banks *the redeemed of the Lord walk, those whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy* Hengstenberg, "hand of trouble", ru. Nor is the rich significance of these clauses diminished by our knowing that they were, from time to time, the burden of the *altar song*. When the ark came to its resting place (1Ch 16:34), they sang to the Lord—"*For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever!*" In Solomon's temple, the singers and players on instruments were making the resplendent walls of the newly risen temple resound with these very words, when the glory descended (2Ch 5:13); and these were the words that burst from the lips of the awe struck and delighted worshippers, who saw the fire descend on the altar (2Ch 7:3). And in Ezra's days (Ezr 3:11), again, as soon as the altar rose, they sang to the Lord—"*Because he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*" Our God is known to be "Love", by the side of the atoning sacrifice. Jeremiah (Jer 33:11) too, shows how restored Israel shall exult in this name.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1. *His mercy endureth for ever.* St. Paul assures us, that the covenant of grace, which is the fountain of all mercy, was made before the foundation of the world, and this he repeats in several of his epistles. The Psalmist teaches the same doctrine, and frequently calls upon us to thank God, because his mercy is for ever and ever—because his mercy is everlasting—and in the text, because

"his mercy endureth for ever; "the word "endureth" is inserted by the translators, for there is no verb in the original neither in strictness of speech could there be any; because there was no time when this *mercy* was not exercised, neither will there be any time when the exercise of it will fail. It was begun before all worlds, when the covenant of grace was made, and it will continue to the ages of eternity, after this world is destroyed. So that mercy was, and is, and will be, "*for ever*", and sinful miserable man may always find relief in this eternal mercy, whenever the sense of his misery disposes him to seek for it. And does not this motive loudly call upon us to "*give thanks*"? Because there is mercy with God—mercy to pity the miserable—and even to relieve them—although they do not deserve it: for mercy is all free grace and unmerited love. Oh! How adorable, then, and gracious is this attribute! How sweet is it and full of consolation to the guilty.—*William Romaine* (1714-1795), in "*A Practical Comment on the Hundred and Seventh Psalm.*"

Verse 2. Redeemed. Moses has given us in the law a clear and full idea of what we are to understand by the word *gal*, here rendered "*redeemed.*" If any person was either sold for a slave or carried away for a captive, then his kinsman, who was nearest to him in blood, had the right and equity of redemption. But no other person was suffered to redeem. And such a kinsman was called "the redeemer", when he paid down the price for which his relation was sold to be a slave, or paid the ransom for which he was led captive. And there is another remarkable instance in the law, wherein it was provided, that in any case any person was found murdered, then the nearest to him in blood was to prosecute the murderer, and to bring him to justice, and this nearest relation thus avenging the murder is called by the same name, a *redeemer*. And how beautifully is the office of our great Redeemer represented under these three instances; he was to us such a Redeemer in spirituals, as these were in temporals: for sin had brought all mankind into slavery and captivity, and had murdered us ...This most high God, who was also man, united in one Christ, came into the world to redeem us, and the same person being both God and man, must merit for us as God in what he did for us as man. Accordingly, by the merits of his obedience and sufferings, he paid the price our redemption, and we were no longer the servants of sin; and by his most precious blood shed upon the cross, by his death and resurrection, he overcame both death, and him who had the power of death, and by delivering us in this manner from slavery and captivity, he fulfilled the third part of the Redeemer's office: for Satan was the murderer from the beginning, who had given both body and soul a mortal wound of sin, which was certain death and eternal misery, and the Redeemer came to avenge the murder. He took our cause in hand, as being our nearest kinsman, and it cost him his own life to avenge ours.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 2. From the hand of the enemy. From all their sins which war against their souls; from Satan their implacable adversary, who is stronger than they; from the law, which threatens and curses them with damnation and death; from death itself, the last enemy, and indeed from the hand of all their

enemies, be they who they may.—*John Gill*.

Verse 3. *And gathered.* If anything can inspire us with gratitude, this motive should prevail, because we cannot but feel the force of it, as it reminds us of that misery from which we in particular were redeemed. The Gentiles had wandered from God, and were so lost and bewildered in the mazes of error and superstition, that nothing but the almighty love of our Lord Jesus could have gathered them together into one church.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 3. *Gathered them.* The Syriac gives as the title of this psalm: God collects the Jews out of captivity, and brings them back out of Babylon the only begotten Son of God also, Jesus Christ, collects the nations from the four corners of the world, by calling upon man to be baptized.—*E.W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 3. *From the west.* The mention of the west leads the psalmist's thoughts to Egypt; and the remembrance of the bondage and labours of the ancestors of the Israelites in Egypt, coupled with the description in a previous psalm (Ps 105:17) of the imprisonment of Joseph.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

Verse 4. *They wandered,* etc. In these words it is not easy to ascertain the persons immediately intended. But this is a circumstance not to be lamented. It is even an advantage; it constrains us to a more spiritual and evangelical interpretation of the subject. And thus the whole representation is fully and easily embodied. For the people of God are "*redeemed*"—redeemed from the curse of the law, the powers of darkness, and the bondage of corruption. They are "*gathered*"—gathered by his grace out of all the diversities of the human race; "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." Whatever this world is to others, they find it to be "a wilderness"; when they are often tried, but their trials urge them to prayer, and prayer brings them relief. And being divinely *conducted*, they at length reach their destination: and this is the conclusion of the whole, and it applies to each of them: *And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.*—*William Jay*.

Verse 4. *Wandered.* Their passage through the wilderness was not a journeying, such as when men pass on in a road to some inhabited place; but a wandering up and down away from all path and road, and so in an endless maze of desolation.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 4. *Wandered in the wilderness,* etc. He has *lost his way*. When he was in the world, he had no difficulties; the path was so broad that he could not mistake it. But when the work of divine grace begins in a sinner's heart, he loses his way. He cannot find his way into the world; God has driven him out of it, as he drove Lot out of Sodom. He cannot find his way to heaven; because he at present lacks those clear testimonies, those bright manifestations whereby alone he can see his path. This is his experience then, that he has lost his way; having turned his back upon the world; and yet unable to realise those enjoyments in his soul that would make heaven his home. He has so lost his way, that whether he turns to the right hand or the left, he has no plain land marks to show him the path in which his soul longs to go. We need not stray from the text to find where the wanderer is. "They

wandered *in the wilderness*." The wilderness is a type and figure of what this life is to the Lord's people. There is nothing that grows in it fit for their food or nourishment. In it the fiery flying serpents—sin and Satan—are perpetually biting and stinging them: and there is nothing in it that can give them any sweet and solid rest. The barren sands of carnality below, and the burning sun of temptation above, alike deny them food and shelter. But there is a word added which throws a further light upon the character of the wilderness. "They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way; a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God—that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, *a solitary way*. This much increases his exercises, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the Wicked One are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced; the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself. It is this walking "*in a solitary way*", that makes the path of trial and temptation so painful to God's family.—J.C. Philpot (1802-1869), in a Sermon entitled "*The Houseless Wanderer*."

Verse 4. *In a solitary way*.—The greater part of the desert being totally destitute of water is seldom visited by any human being; unless where the trading caravans trace out their toilsome and dangerous route across it. In some parts of this extensive waste the ground is covered with low, stunted shrubs, which serve as landmarks for the caravans, and furnish the camels with a scanty forage. In other parts, the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky; a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst. Surrounded by this dreary solitude, the traveller sees the dead bodies of birds, that the violence of the wind has brought from happier regions; and, as he ruminates on the fearful length of his remaining passage, listens with horror to the driving blast, the only sound that interrupts the awful repose of the desert. ("Proceedings of the African Association.")—Mungo Park, 1771-1806

Verse 4. *In a solitary way*. See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder *why melancholy people delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it.

1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, *that they are no more the same that they used to be*; their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them, may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be, if they knew how to help it; but the disease of melancholy is so

obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it.

2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone*, is, because people do not generally mind what they say, nor believe them, but deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words, that is due to the rest of men. But,

3. Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone, is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job 6:21; "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps 71:7; "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps 88:18; "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job; to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable, one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job 2:12-13: "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, that "he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence", La 3:28.—*Timothy Rogers (1660-1729) in "Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

Verse 4. *They found no city to dwell in*; nor even to call at or lodge in, for miles together; which is the case of travellers in some parts, particularly in the desert of Arabia. Spiritual travellers find no settlement, rest, peace, joy, and comfort, but in Christ; nor any indeed in this world, and the things of it; here they have no continuing city, Heb 13:14.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5. *Their soul fainted in them.* The word here used, *pje*, *ataph*, means properly to cover, to clothe, as with a garment, Ps 73:6; or a field with grain, Ps 65:13; then, to hide oneself, Job 23:9; then to cover with darkness, Ps 77:3 and the title of Ps 102:1-28 thus it denotes the state of mind when darkness seems to be in the way—a way of calamity, trouble, sorrow; of weakness, faintness, feebleness. Here it would seem from the connexion to refer to the exhaustion produced by the want of food and drink.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6. *Then they cried*, etc. In these words we find three things remarkable; first, the condition of God's church and people, *trouble and distress*: Secondly, the practice and the exercise of God's people in this state: "*Then they cried unto the Lord*": Thirdly, their success, and the good issue of this

practice: "*And he delivered them*", etc.—Peter Smith, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons, 1644.

Verse 6. *Then they cried.* The root *qeu* has here a peculiar force: it denotes a cry of that kind into which any one, when shaken with a violent tempest of emotion, in the extremity of his grief and anxiety, breaks with a *crash* and with *complaining*, as the heavens send forth thunder and lightning. The original idea of the word being a *crash*, it indicates such complaints and cries as they send forth, who are oppressed by others, or are held fast in straits, in imploring public protection and help. See De 22:24 1Ki 20:39 Isa 19:20.—Venema.

Verse 6. *In their trouble.* observe the words, "Then they cried unto the Lord *in* their trouble." Not *before*, nor *after*, but *in* it. When they were in the midst of it; when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah; when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it; when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind; when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed;—then it was that they cried.—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 6. "*Trouble.*" "*Distresses.*" The condition of the Church, or its most usual lot, is to be under sorrows and afflictions. I say, most usual: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made", Isa 57:16. But as we say of the several callings and trades of life, this man professes such a calling, and that man another; and as the poet said of Hermogenes, Though he hold his peace (peradventure being asleep) yet he's a good singer, and a musician by profession: so say I of the people of God, their trade of life is suffering: and as Julian told the Christians, when they complained of his cruelty, *It is your profession to endure tribulation.*—Peter Smith.

Verse 7. *He led them forth.* Forth out of the world—forth out of a profession—forth out of a name to live—forth out of every thing hateful in his holy and pure eyes.—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 7. *And he led them forth by the right way,* etc. Alexander translates this verse—"And he led them in a straight course, to go to a city of habitation"; and adds, "No exact version can preserve or imitate the paronomasia arising from the etymological affinity of the first verb and noun, analogous to that between the English *walk* and *to walk*, though the Hebrew forms are only similar and not identical. The idea of physical rectitude or straightness necessarily suggests that of moral rectitude or honesty, commonly denoted by the Hebrew word."

Verse 7. *A city of habitation.* Not a city of *inspection!* Many—(Eternal God, will it be any of this company?)—will look in; and "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and they themselves shut out." Not a city of *visitation*. Christians shall not only enter, but abide. They shall go no more out—it is "a city of *habitation*." This conveys the idea of *repose*. The Christian is now a traveller; then he will be a

resident: he is now on the road; he will then be at home: "there remaineth a *rest* for the people of God." It reminds us of a *social state*. It is not a solitary condition; we shall partake of it with an innumerable company of angels, with all the saved from among men, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, our kindred in Christ. "These are fellow citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." It suggests *magnificence*. It is not a village, or a town, but a *city* of habitation. A city is the highest representation of civil community. There have been famous cities; but what are they all to this!—*William Jay*.

Verse 8. *He does wonders for the children of men; and therefore, men should praise the Lord.* And he is the more to be praised because these wonders, twalpn, *niphlaoth*, miracles of mercy and grace, are done for the *undeserving*. There are done Mda ynbl, *libney Adam*, for the children of *Adam*, the corrupt descendants of a rebel father.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 8. *Oh that men would praise the LORD,* etc. Hebrew, That they would confess it to the Lord, both in secret, and in society. This is all the rent that God requireth; he is content that we have the comfort of his blessings, so he may have the honour of them. This was all the fee Christ looked for for his cures: go and tell what God hath done for thee. Words seem to be a poor and slight recompense; but Christ, saith Nazienzen, called himself the Word.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 8. *To the children of men!* We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God; to others as well as to ourselves.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 9. *For he satisfieth the longing soul.* This is the reason which the psalmist gives for the *duty* of thankfulness which he prescribes. "*The longing soul*", hqqv vqn, *nephesh shokekah*, *the soul that pushes forward in eager desire* after salvation.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 10. *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.* Every son of Adam in his natural state before he is redeemed is in "*darkness*" and "*the shadow of death*", and is fast "*bound*" with the chains of *sin* and *misery*, and there is no help for him upon earth—the Almighty God and Saviour alone is able to deliver him.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 11. *Because they rebelled against the words of God.* There is in the Hebrew a play upon similar sounds—*Himru Imree*. God's *words* are those spoken in the *Law* and by *the prophets*. And *contemned the counsel of the Most High*—another play upon like sounds in the Hebrew—*Hatzath Naatzu*.—*A.R. Fausset*.

Verse 12. *He brought down their heart.* O believer, God may see you have many and strong lusts to be subdued, and that you need many and sore afflictions to bring them down. Your pride and obstinacy of heart may be strong, your distempers deeply rooted, and therefore the physic must be proportioned to them.—*John Willison*.

Verse 12. *He brought down their heart with labour.* Those towering passions by which they vainly vaunted themselves above the law and the worship of God, he weakened and curbed, so that they

began to submit themselves to God. The root *enk* taken from the Arabic, describes a process of *weakening* by *compressing the wings* or shrinking the fingers, and is properly applied to *birds*, which when their wings are compressed are obliged to fall to the ground, or to men, who by the shrivelling up of their fingers lose the power of working; whence it is transferred to *oppressions* or *depressions* of any kind.—*Venema*.

Verse 12. *They fell down, and there was none to help.* Affliction is then come to the height and its complete measure, when the sinner is made sensible of his own weakness, and doth see there is no help for him, save in God alone.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 12. *They fell down.* They threw themselves prostrate at his feet for mercy; their heart and strength failed them, as the word signifies, and is used in Ps 31:10; terrified with a sense of divine wrath, they could not stand before the Lord, nor brave it out against him. *And there was none to help.* They could not help themselves, nor was there any creature that could. There is salvation in no other than in Christ; when he saw there was none to help him in that work, his own arm brought salvation to him; and when sinners see there is help in no other, they apply to him.—*John Gill*.

Verse 17. *Fools.* There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verses 17-20. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat* (they are so sick that they can relish, take down nothing,) *and they draw near unto the gates of death*, they are almost in, they were on the brink of hell; what course must be used for their cure? Truly this, *He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.* No herb in the garden of the whole world can do these distressed creatures the least good. Friends may speak, and ministers may speak, yea, angels may speak, and all in vain; the wounds are incurable for all their words; but if God please to speak, the dying soul revives. This word is the only balm that can cure the wounded conscience: *he sendeth his word and healeth them.* Conscience is God's prisoner, he claps it in hold, he layeth it in fetters, that the iron enters the very soul; this he doth by his word, and truly he only who shuts up can let out; all the world cannot open the iron gate, knock off the shackles, and set the poor prisoner at liberty, till God speak the word.—*George Swinnock, 1627-1673*.

Verse 17., etc. A Rescue from Death, with a Return of Praise.—*R. Sibbes' Works, Vol. 51; Nichol's edition*.

Verses 17-21.

1. The distress of the sick.
2. Their cure by the Great Physician.
3. Their grateful behaviour to him.

—*W. Romaine*.

Verses 17-22. A Visit to Christ's Hospital.

1. The names and characters of the patients—"fools"; all sinners are fools.
2. The cause of their pains and afflictions—"because of their transgressions", etc.
3. The progress of the disease—"their soul abhorreth all manner of meat"; and, "they draw near onto the gates of death."
4. The interposition of the physician—"then they cry", etc.,

Verses 19-20.

- (a) Note, when the physician comes in—when "they cry," etc.
- (b) The kind of prayer—a cry.
- (c) What the physician did—"saved," "healed," "delivered."
- (d) How this was effected—"He sent his word," etc.
5. The consequent conduct of those who were healed; they praised God for his goodness. They added sacrifice to this praise, Ps 107:22. In addition to sacrifice the healed ones began to offer songs—"sacrifice of thanksgiving." They added a declaration of joy—"Let them declare his works with rejoicing."

Verse 18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.* Nor is it without emphasis that it is not the sick man who is said to spurn food, but *his soul* ...The Hebrew word *vpn* which properly means a breath, hence a panting appetite, is applied to a *very vehement appetite* for food. When, therefore, the *soul* is said *to abhor food*, it is equivalent to saying *for the vehement appetite for food abhors food*: that is, in the place of an appetite for food, they are oppressed with a loathing; when they ought to be moved with a sharp desire of food, that their exhausted powers might be refreshed, appetite itself becomes a *loathing of food*, which is a most vivid description of the utmost loathing, and utter prostration of all desire.—*Venema*.

Verse 18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.* The best of creature comforts are but vain comforts. What can dainty meat do a man good, when he is sick and ready to die? Then gold and silver, lands and houses, which are the dainty meat of a covetous man, are loathsome to him. When a man is sick to death, his very riches are sapless and tasteless to him; wife and children, friends and acquaintance, can yield but little comfort in that dark hour, yea, they often prove miserable comforters: when we have most need of comfort, these things administer least or no comfort at all to us. Is it not our wisdom, then, to get a stock of such comforts, as will hold and abide fresh with us, when all worldly comforts either leave us, or become tasteless to us? Is it not good to get a store of that food, which how sick soever we are, our stomachs will never loathe? yea, the sicker we are, our stomachs will the more like, hunger after, and feed the more heartily upon. *The flesh of Christ is meat indeed* (Joh 6:55). Feed upon him by faith, in health and sickness, ye will never loathe him. His flesh is the true meat of desires, such meat as will fill and fatten us, but never cloy us. A hungry craving

appetite after Christ, and sweet satisfaction in him, are inseparable, and still the stronger is our appetite, the greater is our satisfaction. And (which is yet a greater happiness) our souls will have the strongest appetite, the most sharp set stomach after Christ, when, through bodily sickness, our stomachs cannot take down, but loathe the very scent and sight of the most pleasant perishing meat, and delicious earthly dainties. Look, that ye provide somewhat to eat, that will go down upon a sick bed; your sick bed meat is Christ; all other dainty food may be an abhorring to you.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 18. *Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.* The case is then growing desperate, and there seems to be no hope left, when it comes to the last stage here described, viz., to loathe and "abhor all manner of meat." The stomach turns at the sight of it, and the man has this loathing and abhorrence of "all manner of meat." What he most loved, and had the best appetite for, is now become so very offensive, that at the smell of it he grows sick and faints away. Nature cannot support itself long under this disorder. If this loss of appetite, and loathing even the smell of the most simple food continue, it must wear the patient out. Indeed, it is not always a mortal distemper; there may be an entire loathing of food, and even fainting away at the smell of it, and the patient may sometimes recover; but in the present case the distemper had continued so long, and was grown so inveterate that there were no hopes, for *they draw nigh*, the Psalmist says, *to the gates of death*. Those gates of brass and bars of iron with which death locks up his prisoners in the grave; and you may judge how great must be the strength of these gates and bars, since only one person was ever able to break through them, and if he had not been more than man, he could never have broken these gates of brass, nor cut these bars of iron in sunder.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 18. *They draw near unto the gates of death.* Death is a great commander, a great tyrant, and hath gates to sit in, as judges and magistrates used to 'sit in the gates.' There are three things implied in this phrase.

1. First, "*They draw near unto the gates of death*", that is, they were "*near to death*"; as he that draws near the gates of a city is near the city, because the gates enter into the city.

2. Secondly, gates are applied to death *for authority*. They were almost in death's jurisdiction. Death is a great tyrant. He rules over all the men in the world, over kings and potentates, and over mean men; and the greatest men fear death most. He is "the king of fears", as Job calls him, Job 18:14; aye, and the fear of kings ...Therefore it is called "the gate of death." It rules and overrules all mankind. Therefore it is said "to reign", Ro 5:21. Death and sin came in together. Sin was the gate that let in death, and ever since death reigned, and will, till Christ perfectly triumph over it, who is the King of that lord and commander, and hath "the key of hell and death", Re 1:18. To wicked men, I say, he is a tyrant, and hath a gate; and when they go through the "*gate of death*", they go to a worse, to a lower place, to hell. It is the trap door to hell.

3. Thirdly. By the "*gate of death*", is meant not only the authority, but *the power of death*; as in the

gospel, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it", Mt 16:18; that is, the power and strength of hell. So here it implies the strength of death, which is very great, for it subdues all. It is the executioner of God's justice.—*Richard Sibbes*.

Verse 18. The sin sick soul without appetite for invitations, encouragements, or promises, however presented. Milk too simple, strong meat too heavy, wine too heating, manna too light, etc.

Verse 18.—Teacheth us, that even appetite to our meat is a good gift of the Lord; also that when men are in greatest extremity, then is God most commonly nigh unto them.—*T. Wilcocks*.

Verse 20. When George Wishart arrived at Dundee, where the plague was raging (1545), he caused intimation to be made that he would preach; and for that purpose chose his station upon the head of the East gate, the infected persons standing without, and those that were whole within. His text was Ps 107:20, *He sent his word and healed them*, etc., wherein he treated of the profit and comfort of God's word, the punishment that comes by contempt of it, the readiness of God's mercy to such as truly turn to him, and the happiness of those whom God takes from this misery, etc. By which sermon he so raised up the hearts of those that heard him, that they regarded not death, but judged them more happy that should then depart, rather than such as should remain behind, considering that they knew not whether they should have such a comforter with them.—*Samuel Clarke* (1599-1682), in "*A General Martyrologie*."

Verse 20. *He sent his word.* The same expression occurs in Ps 147:15,18; compare Isa 55:11. We detect in such passages the first glimmering of St. John's doctrine of the agency of the personal Word. The Word by which the heavens were made, Ps 33:6, is seen to be not merely the expression of God's will, but his messenger mediating between himself and his creatures. It is interesting to compare with this the language of Elihu in the parallel passage of Job 33:23, where what is here ascribed to the agency of the Word is ascribed to that of the "mediating angel, or messenger."—*J.J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 20. *His word who healed them* was his essential Word, even the second person in the Godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ, the word who was made flesh and dwelt among us: of this divine Word it was foretold in the Old Testament, that he should arise with the glory of the morning sun, bringing healing in his wings for all our maladies; and accordingly the New Testament relates, that Jesus went about all Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing ALL manner of sickness, and ALL manner of disease among the people. He healed the bodily disease miraculously, to prove that he was the Almighty Physician of the soul. And it is remarkable that he never rejected any person who applied to him for an outward cure, to demonstrate to us, that he would never cast out any person who should apply to him for a spiritual cure.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 20. *And delivered them from their destructions.* From their pits: or, From their sepulchres. That is, from the deaths to which they were near. Others render, From their nets or snares, Others, *their*

destructions, the diseases in which they were miserable prisoners.—Franciscus Vatablus.

Verse 20. *And delivered them from their destructions.* From the destruction of the body, of the beauty and strength of it by diseases; restoring to health is a redeeming of the life from destruction; from the grave, the pit of corruption and destruction, so called because in it bodies corrupt, putrefy, and are destroyed by worms; and such who are savingly convinced of sin, and blessed with pardoning grace and mercy, are delivered from the everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell.—*John Gill.*

Verse 22. *And let them sacrifice.* For their *healing* they should bring a *sacrifice*; and they should offer the *life* of the innocent animal unto God, as he has offered their *lives*; and let them thus *confess* that God has spared *them* when they deserved to die; and let them *declare* also "his works with rejoicing"; for who will not rejoice when he is delivered from death?—*Adam Clarke.*

As a specimen of medieval spiritualizing we give the following from the Hermit of Hampole:

Verse 23. *They that go down to the sea in ships, etc. They that* (are true prelates and preachers,) *go down* from the sublimity of contemplation, *to the sea*, that is, suiting themselves to the lowly, that they also may be saved, in ships, that is, in the faith, hope and charity of the church, without which they would be drowned in the waters of pleasure, *that do business*, that is, continue preaching, *in great waters*, that is, among many people in order that they may become fishers of men.—*Richardus Hampolitanus.*

Verse 23-27.

While thus our keels still onward boldly strayed—
Now tossed by tempest, now by calms delayed;
To tell the terrors of the deep untried,
What toils we suffered, and what storms defied;
What rattling deluges the black clouds poured,
What dreary weeks of solid darkness lowered;
What mountain surges mountain surges lashed,
What sudden hurricanes the canvas dashed;
What bursting lightnings, with incessant flare,
Kindled in one wide flame the burning air;
What roaring thunders bellowed over our head,
And seemed to shake the reeling ocean's bed:
To tell each horror in the deep revealed,
Would ask an iron throat with tenfold vigour steeled.
Those dreadful wonders of the deep I saw,
Which fill the sailor's breast with sacred awe;
And what the sages, of their learning vain,

Esteem the phantoms of a dreamful brain.

—*Luiz de Camoens (1524-1579), in "the Lusiad."*

Verse 23-31. No language can be more sublime than the description of a storm at sea in this Psalm. It is the very soul of poetry. The utmost simplicity of diction is employed to convey the grandest thoughts. The picture is not crowded; none but the most striking circumstances are selected; and everything is natural, simple, and beyond measure interesting. The whole is an august representation of the Providence of God, ruling in what appears the most ungovernable province of nature. It is God who raises the storm; it is God who stilleth it. The wise men of this world may look no farther than the physical laws by which God acts; but the Holy Spirit, by the Psalmist, views the awful conflict of the elements as the work of God.—*Alexander Carson.*

Verse 23-32. This last picture springs naturally from the mention in Ps 107:3 of the sea; and here the psalmist may have directed his imagination to the usual tempestuousness of the season at which the psalm was sung.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 24. *These see the works of the LORD.* There are sinners who, like Jonah, fleeing from the face of God, go down to the sea, to the cares and pleasures of the world, away from the solid land of humility, quiet, and grace. They occupy themselves in many waters, in needless toils and excessive pleasures, and yet even there God does not leave them, but causes them to see his works and wonders even in the deep of their sins, by giving them timely and sufficient warnings, and alarming them with fear of the abyss.—*Le Blanc, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 25-31.

Think, O my soul, devoutly think,
How, with affrighted eyes
Thou saw'st the wide extended deep
In all its horrors rise!
Confusion dwelt in every face,
And fear in every heart;
When waves on waves, and gulfs on gulfs,
Overcame the pilot's art.
Yet then from all my griefs, O Lord,
Thy mercy set me free,
Whilst in the confidence of prayer
My soul took hold on thee.
For though in dreadful whirls we hung
High on the broken wave,
I knew thou wert not slow to hear,

Nor impotent to save.
The storm was laid, the winds retired,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roared at thy command,
At thy command was still.
In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness I will adore,
And praise thee for thy mercies past;
And humbly hope for more.
My life, if thou preservest my life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, if death must be my doom,
Shall join my soul to thee.

—Joseph Addison.

Verse 26. *They mount up to the heaven.* There be three heavens. 1. *Coelum aerium*. 2. *Coelum astriferum*. 3. *Coelum beatorum*. It is not the latter now they go to in storms, but the two former.—Daniel Pell, in "*An Improvement of the Sea*", 1659.

Verse 26. *They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths.*

To larboard all their oars and canvas bend;
We on a ridge of waters to the sky
Are lifted, down to Erebus again
Sink with the falling wave; thrice howled the rocks
Within their stony caverns, thrice we saw
The splashed up foam upon the lights of heaven.

—Virgil.

Verse 28. *They cry unto the LORD.* His attributes are much honoured in calling upon him, especially in times of danger and distresses.

1. When you call upon God at sea, you honour his *sovereignty*. God says to these proud waves, "So far and no farther!" So, "the storm and hail", they fulfil his will, and when he pleases he commands a calm.

2. Prayer in time of danger honours God's *wisdom*, when we see no way open for mercies and deliverance to come in at, then to look up to him, believing, "He knows how to deliver out of temptation." O how much of the wisdom of God appears in preservation in time of danger! and is it not a good token of mercy coming in when persons pray, though all visible ways are blocked up? This honours God's *wisdom*, which we acknowledge is never at a loss as to ways of bringing in mercy

and deliverance.

3. The *faithfulness* of God is much honoured in times of danger, when he is called upon. The faithfulness of a friend doth most appear in a strait: now if you can rely upon his promise, God's faithfulness is the best line men sinking at sea can lay hold on. So I might add, calling upon God honours all his other attributes.—*John Ryther* (1632-1681) in "*A Plat for Mariners; or, The Seaman's Preacher*," 1675.

Verse 28. *Then they cry.* Tempestuous storms and deadly dangers have brought those upon their knees, that would never had bent in a calm: "*Then they cry.*" If any one would know at what time the sailors take up the duty of prayer, let me say it is when death stares them in the face. If ever you see the heavens veiled in sable blackness, the clouds flying, and the winds roaring under them; you may conclude that some of them (though God knows but few) are at prayer, yea, hard at it with their God. But never believe it that there is any prayer amongst them when the skies are calm, the winds down, and the seas smooth. David tells you not of their praying in good and comfortable weather, but that it is in time of storms, for I believe that neither he nor I ever saw many of them on that strain. . . . God hears oftener from an afflicted people, than he either does or can from a people that are at ease, quiet, and out of danger. *Then they cry.* The prodigal son was very high, and resolved never to return till brought low by pinching and nipping afflictions, then his father had some tidings of him. Hagar was proud in Abraham's house, but humbled in the wilderness. Jonah was asleep in the ship, but awake and at prayer in the whale's belly, Jon 2:1. Manasses lived in Jerusalem like a libertine, but when bound in chains at Babel, his heart was turned to the Lord, 2Ch 33:11-12. Corporal diseases forced many under the gospel to come to Christ, whereas others that enjoyed bodily health would not acknowledge him. One would think that the Lord would abhor to hear those prayers that are made only out of the fear of danger, and not out of the love, reality, and sincerity of the heart. If there had not been so many miseries of blindness, lameness, palsies, fevers, etc., in the days of Christ, there would not have been that flocking after him.—*Daniel Pell.*

Verse 28. *Then they cry unto the LORD.* "*Then*", if ever: hence that speech of one, *Qui nescit orare, discat navigare*, He that cannot pray, let him go to sea, and there he will learn.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 28. *Then they cry*, etc. Gods of the sea and skies (for what resource have I but prayer?) abstain from rending asunder the joints of our shattered bark.—*Ovid.*

Verse 29. *He maketh the storm a calm*, etc. The image is this. Mankind before they are redeemed are like a ship in a stormy sea, agitated with passions, tossed up and down with cares, and so blown about with various temptations, that they are never at rest. This is their calmest state in the smiling day of smooth prosperity: but afflictions will come, the afflictions of sin and Satan, and the world will raise a violent storm, which all the wit and strength of man cannot escape. He will soon be swallowed up of the devouring waves: unless that same God who created the sea speak to it, "Peace, be still."

We are all in the same situation the apostles were, when they were alone in the evening in the midst of the sea, and the wind and the waves were contrary; against which they toiled rowing in vain, until Christ came to them walking upon the sea, and commanded the winds to cease and the waves to be still. Upon which there was a great calm; for they knew his voice, who had spoken them into being, and they obeyed. His word is almighty to compose and still the raging war of the most furious elements. And he is as almighty in the spiritual world, as he is in the natural. Into whatever soul he enters, he commands all the jarring passions to be still, and there is indeed a blessed calm. O may the Almighty Saviour speak thus unto you all, that you may sail on a smooth unruffled sea, until you arrive safe at the desired haven of eternal rest!—*William Romaine*.

Verse 29. If the sailor can do nothing so wise and oftentimes indeed can do nothing else than trust in the Lord, so is it with us in the storms of life. Like the mariner, we must use lawful means for our protection; but what are means without the divine blessing?—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 30. *Desired haven.* At such a time as this sweet April morning, indeed, a breakwater like this (of Portland) may seem of little value, when the waves of the ocean only just suffice to break its face into gems of changing brilliance, and to make whispering music; while vessels of all sizes, like those whose clustering masts we see yonder under the promontory, ride with perfect security in the open road. But in the fierce gales of November or March, when the shrieking blasts drive furiously up the Channel, and the huge mountain billows, green and white, open threatening graves on every side, how welcome would be a safe harbour, easy of access, and placed at a part of the coast which else would be unsheltered for many leagues on either side! Blessed be God for the gift of his beloved Son, the only Harbour of Refuge for poor tempest tossed sinners! We may think lightly of it now, but in the coming day of gloom and wrath, when "the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow", they only will escape who are sheltered there!—*Philip Henry Gosse, in "The Aquarium," 1856.*

Verse 31. *Oh.* This verse seems to include the ardent earnestness of the psalmist's spirit, that seamen would be much in thankfulness, and much and frequent in praising of the Lord their deliverer out of all their distresses. "Oh", seems he to say, that I could put men upon this duty, it would be more comfortable to me, seems the psalmist to say, to find such a principle in the hearts of those that are employed in the great waters, than any one thing in the world again whatsoever. "Oh" is but a little word consisting of two letters, but no word that ever man utters with his tongue comes with that force and affection from the heart as this doth. "Oh" is a word of the highest expression, a word when a man can say no more. This interjection oftentimes starts out of the heart upon a sudden from some unexpected conception, or admiration, or other.—*Daniel Pell*.

Verse 33. *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, etc.* God is the father of the rain. If he withholds that refreshment for a long time, all nature droops, and every green thing dies. The imagery is drawn from Palestine where there were but two annual rainy seasons, and if either of them was long deferred,

the effect was frightful. The channels of considerable rivers were dried up.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 33. *Rivers...Watersprings.* A church enriched with the graces of heaven is compared by the prophets to a well watered garden (Isa 63:11 Jer 31:12), to the paradise of God, watered with its four fruitful rivers: for as everything useful and ornamental in the vegetable world is raised up by water, so is everything in the spiritual world raised up by the Holy Spirit.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 34. *A fruitful land into barrenness.* Hereof Judaea is at this day a notable instance (besides many parts of Asia, and Africa, once very fruitful, now, since they became Mahometan, dry and desert). Judaea, saith one, hath now only some few parcels of rich ground found in it; that men may guess the goodness of the cloth by the fineness of the shreds.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 34. *For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* When I meet with a querulous husbandman, he tells me of a churlish soil, of a wet seed time, of a green winter, of an unkindly spring, of a lukewarm summer, of a blustering autumn; but I tell him of a displeased God, who will be sure to contrive and fetch all seasons and elements, to his own most wise drifts and purposes.—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 34. *For the wickedness.* God locks up the clouds, because we have shut up our mouths. The earth is grown hard as iron to us, because we have hardened our hearts against our miserable neighbours. The cries of the poor for bread are loud, because our cries against sin have been so low. Sickneses run apace from house to house, and sweep away the poor unprepared inhabitants, because we sweep not out the sin that breeds them.—*Richard Baxter, 1615-1691.*

Verse 35. *Dry ground into watersprings.* If God afflict, his justice findeth the cause of it in man; but if he do good to any man, it is of his own good pleasure, without any cause in man: therefore no reason is given here of this change, as was of the former, but simply, "*He turneth dry ground into watersprings.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 40. *He poureth contempt upon princes.* Mighty potentates, who have been the terror and dread of the whole world, when once denuded of their dignity and power, have become the sport even of their own dependants.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 40. *Princes.* Persons of high rank are the most exempt, in ordinary times, from destitution and want, and misery must reach a great height when it invades them. No part of the world probably has witnessed so many and great reverses of this kind as the regions and countries of the East.—*William Walford.*

Verse 41. *He setteth the poor on high from affliction.* How high? Above the reach of the curse, which shall never touch him; above the power of Satan, which shall never ruin him; above the reigning influence of sin, which "shall not have dominion over him"; above the possibility of being banished from his presence, for "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." This is the way God sets his people on high, instructing them in the mysteries of his word, and giving them to partake

the joys that are contained therein.—*Joseph Irons, 1786-1852.*

Verse 42. *The righteous shall see it.* The word here rendered "righteous" is not what the Scripture commonly uses to signify righteous or justified persons; but it is another word, and conveys another idea. It signifies to direct, to set right; and the "righteous" here mentioned are they, who are directed in the right way, and walk, as Enoch did, with God in his way, and not in the way of the world. And these "shall see" the goodness and mercy of God's dealings with the fallen race of man. They shall have eyes to see the ways of his providence. The same grace which set them right, will manifest to them the reasonableness of the plan of redemption. They shall see and admire, and be thankful for the wonders of his redeeming love, which are recorded in this divine hymn.—*William Romaine.*

Verse 42. *"All iniquity shall stop her mouth."* "Iniquity" is here personified, and denotes the *iniquitous*; but the abstract is more poetical, *"Stop her mouth."* Tongue tied, literally, mostly shut; which, perhaps, might be not improperly vernaculized.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 43. *Whoso is wise, etc.* Or as it may be read interrogatively, *"Who is wise?"* as in Jer 9:12 Ho 14:9; that is, spiritually wise, wise unto salvation; who is made to know wisdom in the hidden part; for not such as possessed of natural wisdom, or worldly wise men, much less who are wise to do evil, are here meant. *"And will observe these things"*; the remarkable appearances of divine Providence to persons in distress; the various changes and vicissitudes in the world; the several afflictions of God's people, and their deliverances out of them; the wonderful works of God in nature, providence, and grace; these will be observed, taken notice of, laid up in the mind, and kept by such who are truly wise, who know how to make a right use and proper improvement of them. *Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD*; every one of the wise men; they will perceive the kindness of God unto men, in the several dispensations of his providence towards them, and his special love and kindness towards his own people, even in all their afflictions they will perceive this to be at the bottom of every mercy and blessing; they will understand more of the nature and excellency of it, and know more of the love of God and Christ, which passeth knowledge. Or, *the kindnesses of the Lord shall be understood*; that is, by wise men; so R. Moses in Aben Ezra renders the words.—*John Gill.*

Verse 43. *Will observe these things, etc.* Will carefully note and remark what is here said of the fall and recovery of mankind, of our state by nature and by grace. True wisdom consists in observing these two things, what we are in ourselves, and what we are in Christ; in a deep sense of our misery by sin, stirring us up to seek our remedy in the Redeemer. This is wisdom. And whosoever is thus wise unto salvation *shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord*; shall be able to apply what he understands of it to his own private use and benefit. The verb in the original rendered *"shall understand"*, is in the conjugation called Hithpael, which signifies to act upon itself. Whosoever observes those things properly finds his own interest in them. He makes the understanding of them

useful to himself. He does not study them as a science or theory, but as interesting points in which he is nearly concerned, and which he therefore tries to bring home for his own private advantage. When he hears of the mercies of the Lord Jesus recorded in this psalm he desires to partake of them. When he hears of the great deliverances vouchsafed to sinful ruined man, he studies to have his own share in them. What is said of these persons who wandered out of the way in the wilderness, and fell into the bondage of sin, and were afflicted with its diseases, and troubled like a stormy sea, with its continual tempests; all this he knows was his own case, and therefore what follows of their flourishing state after Christ delivered them may be his also if he cry unto the Lord, as they did, for help. And he never ceases praying and seeking, until the blessed Jesus brings him to the haven of the church, where he would be. And if he find the church diminished and brought low, he is not discouraged; but relies on the promises of his God, who will set him on high out of the reach of public calamity, when he comes to destroy an infidel church. He observes what is said on this psalm concerning those things; and he knows it to be true, by his own experience. And therefore the lovingkindness of the Lord here recorded is to him a subject of exceeding great joy, because he has tasted of it. Whoso is wise will bring his knowledge of this psalm home to his own heart, and he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, he shall be able to apply what he understands to his own benefit, and shall therefore be continually praising the Lord for his goodness, and declaring the wonders which he hath done for the salvation of men.—*William Romaine*.

Verse 43. *Observe these things.* "To observe, signifieth not only with our eyes to behold it; but so to stir up our minds to the consideration of a thing, that one may grow the better by it", saith a grave author. Now in this notion of it, how few are they that observe "*these things*"? . . . If you would by observing the providence of God understand his loving kindness, and gain a spiritual wisdom, *let your eye affect your heart*. Mollerus telleth us, such an observation is here intended *unde ad pietatem exuscitemur, ut inde meliores evadamus*, "as will quicken us to piety, and help to make us better." There are many careless observers of providence, who indeed see *events* rather than providence; they see much that comes to pass in the world, but consider nothing of God in them...They do by the book of providence, as Augustine complained of himself, that in his unregenerate state he did by the book of Scripture; he rather brought to it *discutiendi acumen*, than *discendi pietatem*. So men bring to the great works of God rather an acute eye and wit to find out the immediate causes, and reasons natural and political, than a *trembling, humble heart*, that they might learn by them more to acknowledge, *love, fear, adore*, and revere the great and mighty God whose works these are. Let not yours be such an observation; but let your eye, beholding God in his providential dispensations, affect your hearts with that adoration and veneration, that love and fear of the great and mighty God, which such works of God do call to you for.—*John Collinges* (1623-1690), in "*Several Discourses concerning the actual Providence of God.*"

Verse 43. *Observe these things.* These mighty doings of our Saviour and our God in delivering his feeble creatures from the trackless wilderness of error,—from the noisome chain of carnal lust,—from the deadly sickness of a corrupt nature,—and from the wild tempest of earthly passion, deserve the thoughtful joy of all who would be faithful servants of their Lord. The mouth of unbelief and the excuses of iniquity are stopped by the sight of the marvels of that mercy which endureth for ever. "The accuser of the brethren" is silenced and cast down. The truly wise will ponder these things, for in the knowledge of them is true wisdom; and so pondering, there shall open before them, ever plainer, fuller, clearer, brighter, the revelation of that mighty love of their eternal Father which surpasses all understanding, and is more vast than all thought.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 43. How great a volume might be wrote, *de observandis Providentiae*, concerning the observable things of Divine Providence. I have seen a picture (one of those you call kitchen pieces) concerning which it hath been proposed to me, that for so many hours I should view it as curiously as I could; yet the proposer would for any wager undertake to show me something in it which I did not observe. Truly Providence is such a thing, I can never look upon it, I can never take the motions of it into my thoughts, but some new observation tenders itself into my thoughts, I must turn my eyes from this wonderful work, for I see they will not be satisfied with seeing, my mind will never be filled with observation.—*John Collinges.*

Verse 43. When we speak of the love and favour of God to his people, we are prone to understand by it nothing but pleasing providence, grateful to our senses: now the *lovingkindness* of God is not only seen in pleasing dispensations, but in adverse providence also: "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth": "all things are yours", saith the apostle. This knowledge must be gained by *observation*.—*John Collinges.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. This psalm is like the Interpreter's house in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Pilgrim is told that he will there see excellent and profitable things. The same promise is given in the introduction to this psalm, where we have,

1. The source of these excellent things—the goodness and all enduring mercy of God; mercy not exhausted by the unworthiness of its objects.

2. Their acknowledgment, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Men will not own it, but the redeemed of the Lord will. It is the experience of such that is pictorially represented in this psalm. Let every one speak of God as he finds. Is he good when he takes away as well as when he gives "The redeemed of the Lord will say so." Is he merciful when he frowns as well as when he smiles? "The redeemed of the Lord say so." Does he make all things work together for good to them that love him? "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

3. Their end. Praise and thanksgiving: "Oh give", etc.

(a) For general mercies;

(b) For redemption;

(c) For special deliverances.—*G.R.*

Verses 1-2. The duty of praise is universal, the real presentation of it remains with the redeemed. Particular redemption should lead to specific praise, special testimony to truth and special faith in God: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Verse 3. The ingathering of the chosen.

1. All wandered.

2. Their ways different.

3. All observed of the Lord.

4. All brought to Jesus as to one centre. Note ways, and times of gathering.

Verse 4. Wandering Jews. Illustrate the roaming of a mind in search of truth, peace, love, purity, etc.

Verse 4. The words contain a brief history of man's fall and misery and of his restoration by Jesus Christ; which are described under these particulars.

1. The lost state of men by nature.

2. They are brought to a right sense of it, and cry to the Lord Jesus for deliverance.

3. He hears them and delivers them out of all their distresses.

4. The tribute of thanks due to him for this great deliverance.

—*W. Romaine.*

Verse 5. Spiritual hunger the cause of faintness. Necessity of feeding the soul.

Verse 7. Divine grace stimulating our exertions. "He led them forth ...that they might go."

Verse 8. He who has enjoyed God's help should mark,

1. In what distress he has been;

2. How he has called to God;

3. How God has helped him;

4. What thanks he has returned; and,

5. What thanks he is yet bound to render.

—*Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 9. A great general fact. The condition, the benefactor, the blessing "goodness", the result—"satisfieth." Then the further result of praise as seen in Ps 107:8.

Verses 12-13.

1. The convicted soul's abject condition—humbled, exhausted, prostrate, deserted.

2. His speedy deliverance. Cried, cried while in trouble, unto the Lord, he saved, out of their distresses.

Verse 13. Man's work and God's work. *They* cried and *He* saved.

Verse 14. God gives light, life, liberty.

Verse 20. Recovery from sickness must be ascribed to the Lord, and gratitude should flow forth because of it. But the text describes spiritual and mental sickness. Notice,

1. The Patient in his extremity.

(a) He is a fool: by nature inclined to evil.

(b) He has played the fool (see Ps 107:17), "transgression", "iniquities."

(c) He now has lost all appetite and is past all cure.

(d) He is at death's door.

(e) But he has begun to pray.

2. The Cure in its simplicity.

(a) Christ the Word is the essential cure. He heals the guilt, habit, depression, and evil results of sin. For every form of malady Christ has healing; hence preachers should preach him much, and all meditate much upon him.

(b) The word in the Book is the instrumental cure: its teachings, doctrines, precepts, promises, encouragements, invitations, examples.

(c) The word of the Lord by the Holy Spirit is the applying cure. He leads us to believe. He is to be sought by the sick soul. He is to be relied upon by those who would bring others to the Great Physician.

Verse 26. The ups and downs of a convicted sinner's experience.

Verse 27. The awakened sinner staggered and nonplussed.

Verses 33-34. The scene which here opens with a landscape of beauty and fertility is suddenly changed into a dry and barren wilderness. The rivers are dried up, the springs cease to flow among the hills, and the verdant fields are scorched and bare. The reason assigned for this is "the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This picture needs no interpretation to the people of God. It is precisely what happens within them when they have fallen into sin.—*G.R.*

Verse 34. The curse, cause, and cure of barrenness in a church.

Verse 35. Hope for decayed churches lies in God; he can work a marvellous change, he does do it—"turneth": he will do it when the cause of barrenness is removed by repentance.

Verses 35-38. Here the scene again changes. The springs again gush forth, calm lakes again repose in the midst of foliage and flowers, the hills are clothed with luxuriant vines, and the fields are covered with corn; plenty abounds both in town and country, and men and cattle increase. This picture, too, has its counterpart in experimental godliness. "Instead of the thorn shall come up", etc., "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them", etc. The one scene precedes prayer, the other follows it. A desolate wilderness before, the garden of Eden behind.—*G.R.*

Verses 39-41. The scene again is reversed. There is a change again from freedom to oppression; from plenty to want; from honour to contempt. Then a revival again as suddenly appears. The poor and afflicted are lifted up, and the bereaved have "families like a flock." Such are the changeful scenes through which the people of God are led; and such the experience by which they are made meet for the pure, perfect, and perpetual joys of heaven.—*G.R.*

Verses 42-43. Such surprising turns are of use,

1. For the solacing of saints; they observe these dispensations with pleasure: "The righteous shall see it, and rejoice", in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifestation of his dominion over the children of men.

2. For the silencing of sinners: "all iniquity shall stop her mouth"; *i.e.* it shall be a full conviction of the folly of those that deny the divine presence.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things"—these various dispensations of divine providence, "even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 43. The best observation and the noblest understanding.

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH PSALM

Pe lagov. Nec inter vivos, nec inter mortuos, Neither amongst the Living, nor amongst the Dead. Or, an IMPROVEMENT of the SEA. Upon

The Nine Nautical Verses in the 107th Psalme...By DANIEL PELL, Preacher of the Word. London...1659 (8vo.).

A Special Treatise of God's Providence, and of Comforts against all kinds of crosses and calamities to be fetched from the same. With an exposition of the 107th Psalme. By P. Baro. Englished by I.L. (John Ludham) B.L. (London 1588, 8vo. Black Letter.)

A Practical Comment on the Hundred and Seventh Psalm. Preached at the Thursday's Lecture, at St. Dunstan's Church in the West, London. By William Romaine, Lecturer of the said Church. London, 1767. (8vo.)

Psalm 108

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE AND SUBJECT. A Song or Psalm of David. To be sung jubilantly as a national hymn, or solemnly as a sacred psalm. We cannot find it in our heart to dismiss this psalm by merely referring

the reader first to Ps 57:7-11 and then to Ps 60:5-12, though it will be at once seen that those two portions of Scripture are almost identical with the verses before us. It is true that most of the commentators have done so, and we are not so presumptuous as to dispute their wisdom; but we hold for ourselves that the words would not have been repeated if there had not been an object for so doing, and that this object could not have been answered if every hearer of it had said, "Ah, we had that before, and therefore we need not meditate upon it again." The Holy Spirit is not so short of expressions that he needs to repeat himself, and the repetition cannot be meant merely to fill the book: there must be some intention in the arrangement of two former divine utterances in a new connection; whether we can discover that intent is another matter. It is at least ours to endeavour to do so, and we may expect divine assistance therein.

We have before us *The Warrior's Morning Song*, with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day. As an old Prussian officer was wont in prayer to invoke the aid of "his Majesty's August Ally", so does David appeal to his God and set up his banner in Jehovah's name.

DIVISION. First we have an utterance dictated by the spirit of praise, Ps 108:1-5; then a second deliverance evoked by the spirit of believing prayer, Ps 108:6-12; and then a final word of resolve (Ps 108:13), as the warrior hears the war trumpet summoning him to join battle immediately, and therefore marches with his fellow soldiers at once to the fray.

EXPOSITION

These five verses are found in Ps 57:7-11 almost verbatim: the only important alteration being the use of the great name of JEHOVAH in Ps 108:3 instead of Adonai in Ps 57:9. This the English reader will only be able to perceive by the use of capitals in the present Psalm and not in Ps 57:7-11. There are other inconsiderable alterations, but the chief point of difference probably lies in *the position* of the verses. In Ps 57:7-11 these notes of praise follow prayer and grow out of it; but in this case the psalmist begins at once to sing and give praise, and afterwards prays to God in a remarkably confident manner, so that he seems rather to seize the blessing than to entreat for it. Sometimes we must climb to praise by the ladder of prayer, and at other times we must bless God for the past in order to be able in faith to plead for the present and the future. By the aid of God's Spirit we can both pray ourselves up to praise, or praise the Lord till we get into a fit frame for prayer. In Ps 57:7-11 these words are a song in the cave of Adullam, and are the result of faith which is beginning its battles amid domestic enemies of the most malicious kind; but here they express the continued resolve and praise of a man who has already weathered many a campaign, has overcome all home conflicts, and is looking forward to conquests far and wide. The passage served as a fine close for one psalm, and it makes an equally noteworthy opening for another. We cannot too often with fixed

heart resolve to magnify the Lord; nor need we ever hesitate to use the same words in drawing near to God, for the Lord who cannot endure vain repetitions is equally weary of vain variations. Some expressions are so admirable that they ought to be used again; who would throw away a cup because he drank from it before? God should be served with the best words, and when we have them they are surely good enough to be used twice. To use the same words continually and never utter a new song would show great slothfulness, and would lead to dead formalism, but we need not regard novelty of language as at all essential to devotion, nor strain after it as an urgent necessity. It may be that our heavenly Father would here teach us that if we are unable to find a great variety of suitable expressions in devotion, we need not in the slightest degree distress ourselves, but may either pray or praise, "using the same words."

Verse 1. *O God, my heart is fixed.* Though I have many wars to disturb me, and many cares to toss me to and fro, yet I am settled in one mind and cannot be driven from it. My heart has taken hold and abides in one resolve. Thy grace has overcome the fickleness of nature, and I am now in a resolute and determined frame of mind. I will sing and give praise. Both with voice and music will I extol thee—"I will sing and play", as some read it. Even though I have to shout in the battle I will also sing in my soul, and if my fingers must needs be engaged with the bow, yet shall they also touch the ten stringed instrument and show forth thy praise. Even with my glory—with my intellect, my tongue, my poetic faculty, my musical skill, or whatever else causes me to be renowned, and confers honour upon me. It is my glory to be able to speak and not to be a dumb animal, therefore my voice shall show forth thy praise; it is my glory to know God and not to be a heathen, and therefore my instructed intellect shall adore thee; it is my glory to be a saint and no more a rebel, therefore the grace I have received shall bless thee; it is my glory to be immortal and not a mere brute which perisheth, therefore my inmost life shall celebrate thy majesty. When he says *I will*, he supposes that there might be some temptation to refrain, but this he puts on one side, and with fixed heart prepares himself for the joyful engagement. He who sings with a fixed heart is likely to sing on, and all the while to sing well.

Verse 2. *Awake, psaltery and harp.* As if he could not be content with voice alone, but must use the well tuned strings, and communicate to them something of his own liveliness. Strings are wonderful things when some men play upon them, they seem to become sympathetic and incorporated with the minstrel as if his very soul were imparted to them and thrilled through them. Only when a thoroughly enraptured soul speaks in the instrument can music be acceptable with God: as mere musical sound the Lord can have no pleasure therein, he is only pleased with the thought and feeling which are thus expressed. When a man has musical gift, he should regard it as too lovely a power to be enlisted in the cause of sin. Well did Charles Wesley say:—

"If well I know the tuneful art

To captivate a human heart,
The glory, Lord, be thine.
A servant of thy blessed will,
I here devote my utmost skill
To sound the praise divine."

"Thine own musician, Lord, inspire,
And let my consecrated lyre
Repeat the Psalmist's part.
His Son and Thine reveal in me,
And fill with sacred melody
The fibres of my heart."

I myself will awake early. I will call up the dawn. The best and brightest hours of the day shall find me heartily aroused to bless my God. Some singers had need to awake, for they sing in drawling tones, as if they were half asleep; the tune drags wearily along, there is no feeling or sentiment in the singing, but the listener hears only a dull mechanical sound, as if the choir ground out the notes from a worn out barrel organ. Oh, choristers, wake up, for this is not a work for dreamers, but such as requires your best powers in their liveliest condition. In all worship this should be the personal resolve of each worshipper: "I myself will awake."

Verse 3. *I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people.* Whoever may come to hear me, devout or profane, believer or heathen, civilized or barbarian, I shall not cease my music. David seemed inspired to foresee that his Psalms would be sung in every land, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. His heart was large, he would have the whole race of man listen to his joy in God, and lo, he has his desire, for his psalmody is cosmopolitan; no poet is so universally known as he. He had but one theme, he sang Jehovah and none beside, and his work being thus made of gold, silver, and precious stones, has endured the fiery ordeal of time, and was never more prized than at this day. Happy man, to have thus made his choice to be the Lord's musician, he retains his office as the Poet Laureate of the kingdom of heaven, and shall retain it till the crack of doom. And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. This is written, not only to complete the parallelism of the verse, but to reaffirm his fixed resolve. He would march to battle praising Jehovah, and when he had conquered he would make the captured cities ring with Jehovah's praises. He would carry his religion with him wherever he pushed his conquests, and the vanquished should not hear the praises of David, but the glories of the Lord of Hosts. Would to God that wherever professing Christians travel they would carry the praises of the Lord with them! It is to be feared that some leave their religion when they leave their homes. Nations and peoples would soon know the gospel of Jesus if every Christian traveller were as intensely devout as the Psalmist. Alas, it is to be feared that the Lord's

name is profaned rather than honoured among the heathen by many who are named by the name of Christ.

Verse 4. *For thy mercy is great above the heavens,* and therefore there must be no limit of time, or place, or people, when that mercy is to be extolled. As the heavens over arch the whole earth, and from above mercy pours down upon men, so shalt thou be praised everywhere beneath the sky. Mercy is greater than the mountains, though they pierce the clouds; earth cannot hold it all, it is so vast, so boundless, so exceeding high that the heavens themselves are over topped thereby. And thy truth teacheth unto the clouds. As far as we can see we behold thy truth and faithfulness, and there is much beyond which lies shrouded in cloud, but we are sure that it is all mercy, though it be far above and out of our sight. Therefore shall the song be lifted high and the psalm shall peal forth without stint of far resounding music. Here is ample space for the loudest chorus, and a subject which deserves thunders of praise.

Verse 5. *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.* Let thy praise be according to the greatness of thy mercy. Ah, if we were to measure our devotion thus, with what ardour should we sing! The whole earth with its overhanging dome would seem too scant an orchestra, and all the faculties of all mankind too little for the hallelujah. Angels would be called in to aid us, and surely they would come. They will come in that day when the whole earth shall be filled with the praises of Jehovah. We long for the time when God shall be universally worshipped, and his glory in the gospel shall be everywhere made known. This is a truly missionary prayer. David had none of the exclusiveness of the modern Jew, or the narrow heartedness of some nominal Christians. For God's sake, that his glory might be everywhere revealed, he longed to see heaven and earth full of the divine praise. Amen, so let it be. Now prayer follows upon praise, and derives strength of faith and holy boldness therefrom. It is frequently best to begin worship with a hymn, and then to bring forth our vials full of odours after the harps have commenced their sweeter sounds.

Verse 6. *That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.* Let my prayer avail for all the beloved ones. Sometimes a nation seems to hang upon the petitions of one man. With what ardour should such an one pour out his soul! David does so here. It is easy praying for the Lord's beloved, for we feel sure of a favourable answer, since the Lord's heart is already set upon doing them good: yet it is solemn work to plead when we feel that the condition of a whole beloved nation depends upon what the Lord means to do with us whom he has placed in a representative position. "Answer *me*, that thy many beloved ones may be delivered": it is an urgent prayer. David felt that the case demanded the *right hand* of God,—his wisest, speediest, and most efficient interposition, and he feels sure of obtaining it for himself, since his cause involved the safety of the chosen people. Will the Lord fail to use his right hand of power on behalf of those whom he has set at his right hand of favour? Shall not the beloved be delivered by him who loves them? When our suit is

not a selfish one, but is bound up with the cause of God, we may be very bold about it.

Verse 7. *God hath spoken in his holiness.* Aforetime the Lord had made large promises to David, and these his holiness had guaranteed. The divine attributes were pledged to give the son of Jesse great blessings; there was no fear that the covenant God would run back from his plighted word. I will rejoice. If God has spoken we may well be glad: the very fact of a divine revelation is a joy. If the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have spoken to us as he has done. But what God has spoken is a still further reason for gladness, for he has declared "the sure mercies of David", and promised to establish his seed upon his throne, and to subdue all his enemies. David greatly rejoiced after the Lord had spoken to him by the mouth of Nathan. He sat before the Lord in a wonder of joy. See 1Ch 17:1-27, and note that in the next chapter David began to act vigorously against his enemies, even as in this Psalm he vows to do. I will divide Shechem. Home conquests come first. Foes must be dislodged from Israel's territory, and lands properly settled and managed. And mete out the valley of Succoth. On the other side Jordan as well as on this the land must be put in order, and secured against all wandering marauders. Some rejoicing leads to inaction, but not that which is grounded upon a lively faith in the promise of God. See how David prays, as if he had the blessing already, and could share it among his men: this comes of having sung so heartily unto the Lord his helper. See how he resolves on action, like a man whose prayers are only a part of his life, and vital portions of his action.

Verse 8. *Gilead is mine.* Thankful hearts dwell upon the gifts which the Lord has given them, and think it no task to mention them one by one. Manasseh is mine. I have it already, and it is to me the token and assurance that the rest of the promised heritage will also come into my possession in due time. If we gratefully acknowledge what we have we shall be in better heart for obtaining that which as yet we have not received. He who gives us Gilead and Manasseh will not fail to put the rest of the promised territory into our hands. Ephraim also is the strength of mine head. This tribe furnished David with more than twenty thousand "mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers": the faithful loyalty of this band was, no doubt, a proof that the rest of the tribe were with him, and so he regarded them as the helmet of the state, the guard of his royal crown. Judah is my lawgiver. There had he seated the government and chief courts of justice. No other tribe could lawfully govern but Judah: till Shiloh came the divine decree fixed the legal power in that state. To us also there is no lawgiver but our Lord who sprang out of Judah; and whenever Rome, or Canterbury, or any other power shall attempt to set up laws and ordinances for the church, we have but one reply—"Judah is my lawgiver." Thus the royal psalmist rejoiced because his own land had been cleansed of intruders, and a regular government had been set up, and guarded by an ample force, and in all this he found encouragement to plead for victory over his foreign foes. Even thus do we plead with the Lord that as in one land and another Christ's holy gospel has been set up and

maintained, so also in other lands the power of his sceptre of grace may be owned till the whole earth shall bow before him, and the Edom of Antichrist shall be crushed beneath his feet.

Verse 9. *Moab is my washpot.* This nation had shown no friendly spirit to the Israelites, but had continually viewed them as a detested rival, therefore they were to be subdued and made subject to David's throne. He claims by faith the victory, and regards his powerful enemy with contempt. Nor was he disappointed, for "the Moabites became David's servants and brought him gifts" (2Sa 8:2). As men wash their feet after a long journey, and so are revived, so vanquished difficulties serve to refresh us: we use Moab for a washpot. Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. It shall be as the floor upon which the bather throws his sandals, it shall lie beneath his foot, subject to his will and altogether his own. Edom was proud, but David throws his slipper at it; its capital was high, but he casts his sandal over it; it was strong, but he hurls his shoe at it as the gage of battle. He had not entered yet into its rock built fortresses, but since the Lord was with him he felt sure that he would do so. Under the leadership of the Almighty, he felt so secure of conquering even fierce Edom itself that he looks upon it as a mere slave, over which he could exult with impunity. We ought never to fear those who are defending the wrong side, for since God is not with them their wisdom is folly, their strength is weakness, and their glory is their shame. We think too much of God's foes and talk of them with too much respect. Who is this pope of Rome? His Holiness? Call him not so, but call him His Blasphemy! His Profanity! His Impudence! What are he and his cardinals, and his legates, but the image and incarnation of Antichrist, to be in due time cast with the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire? Over Philistia will I triumph. David had done so in his youth, and he is all the more sure of doing it again. We read that "David smote the Philistines and subdued them" (2Sa 8:1), even as he hath smitten Edom and filled it with his garrisons. The enemies with whom we battled in our youth are yet alive, and we shall have more brushes with them before we die, but, blessed be God, we are by no means dismayed at the prospect, for we expect to triumph over them even more easily than aforetime.

Thy right hand shall thy people aid;
Thy faithful promise makes us strong;
We will Philistia's land invade.
And over Edom chant the song.
Through thee we shall most valiant prove,
And tread the foe beneath our feet;
Through thee our faith shall hills remove,
And small as chaff the mountains beat.

Verse 10. Faith leads on to strong desire for the realization of the promise, and hence the practical question, Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into *Edom*? The difficulty is plainly

perceived. Petra is strong and hard to enter: the Psalmist warrior knows that he cannot enter the city by his own power, and he therefore asks who is to help him. He asks of the right person, even of his Lord, who has all men at his beck, and can say to this man, "show my servant the road", and he will show it, or to this band, "cut your way into the rock city", and they will assuredly do it. Of Edom it is written by Obadiah, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." David looked for his conquest to Jehovah's infinite power and he looked not in vain.

Verse 11. *Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off?* This is grand faith which can trust the Lord even when he seems to have cast us off. Some can barely trust him when he pampers them, and yet David relied upon him when Israel seemed under a cloud and the Lord had hidden his face. O for more of this real and living faith. The casting off will not last long when faith so gloriously keeps her hold. None but the elect of God who have obtained "like precious faith" can sing—

"Now thou arrayest thine awful face
In angry frowns, without a smile;
We, through the cloud, believe thy grace,
Secure of thy compassion still."

And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Canst thou for ever forsake thine own and leave thy people to be overthrown by thine enemies? The sweet singer is sure that Edom shall be captured, because he cannot and will not believe that God will refrain from going forth with the armies of his chosen people. When we ask ourselves, "Who will be the means of our obtaining a promised blessing?" we need not be discouraged if we perceive no secondary agent, for we may then fall back upon the great Promiser himself, and believe that he himself will perform his word unto us. If no one else will lead us into Edom, the Lord himself will do it, if he has promised it. Or if there must be visible instruments he will use *our hosts*, feeble as they are. We need not that any new agency should be created, God can strengthen our present hosts and enable them to do all that is needed; all that is wanted even for the conquest of a world is that the Lord go forth with such forces as we already have. He can bring us into the strong city even by such weak weapons as we wield today.

Verse 12. *Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.* This prayer has often fallen from the lips of men who have been bitterly disappointed by their fellows, and it has also been poured out unto the Lord in the presence of some gigantic labour in which mortal power is evidently of no avail. Edom cannot be entered by any human power, yet from its fastnesses the robber bands come rushing down; therefore, O Lord, do thou interpose and give thy people deliverance. Help divine is expected because help human is of no avail. We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our

confidence in man is altogether gone. When the help of man is vain, we shall not find it vain to seek the help of God.

Verse 13. God's help shall inspire us to help ourselves. Faith is neither a coward nor a sluggard: she knows that God is with her, and therefore she does valiantly; she knows that he will tread down her enemies, and therefore she arises to tread them down in his name. Where praise and prayer have preceded the battle, we may expect to see heroic deeds and decisive victories. Through God is our secret support; from that source we draw all our courage, wisdom, and strength. We shall do valiantly. This is the public outflow from that secret source: our inward and spiritual faith proves itself by outward and valorous deeds. He shall tread down our enemies. They shall fall before him, and as they lie prostrate he shall march over them, and all the hosts of his people with him. This is a prophecy. It was fulfilled to David, but it remains true to the Son of David and all who are on his side. The Church shall yet arouse herself to praise her God with all her heart, and then with songs and hosannas she will advance to the great battle; her foes shall be overthrown and utterly crushed by the power of her God, and the Lord's glory shall be above all the earth. Send it in our time, we beseech thee, O Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Note the different application of the words as they are used in Ps 57:1-11 and Ps 60:1-12, and as they are employed in Ps 108:1-13. In the former they were prophetic of prosperity yet to come, and consolatory in the expectation of approaching troubles. In the latter, they are eucharistic for mercies already received, and descriptive of the glorious things which God has prepared for his Son and for Israel his people. The Psalm, thus interpreted, announces that Messiah's travail is ended, when the troubles of Israel are brought to a close. David's Son and David's Lord has taken to himself his great power and begun to reign, and sitting upon the throne of his glory, he sings this hymn, Ps 108:1-6. But with the glory of the Redeemer is associated also the restoration, to favour and happiness, of Israel, his long cast off, but not forgotten people. The setting up of King Messiah upon the holy hill of Zion is graphically described, and all Jehovah's promises are realised in the most ample measure. Messiah is described as a conqueror when the battle is won, and kings and nations, prostrate at his feet, await his sentence and judgment upon them. "I will rejoice. I will divide and portion out Shechem and the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and I give it to the children of Gad and Reuben. And Manasseh also is mine. Ephraim is my strength in war: my horn of defence. Judah is my king." Thus in gracious and flattering words, the victor addresses his confederates and subjects. In a different strain, a strain of sarcasm and contempt, he announces his pleasure respecting his vanquished enemies." Moab I will use as a vessel to wash my feet in. Over proud Edom I will cast my shoe, as an angry master to a slave ministering to him. Philistia follow my chariot,

and shout forth my triumph." But what is to be understood of the next passage, Ps 108:10, "Who will bring me into Edom?" Edom is already treated as a vassal state, Ps 108:9. When all the nations become the kingdoms of Messiah, what is this Edom that is to be amongst his latest triumphs? One passage only seems to bear upon it, Isa 63:1, and from this we learn that it is from Edom as the last scene of his vengeance, the conquering Messiah will come forth, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." This Edom is therefore named with anxiety, because after its overthrow, Messiah will shine out "King of kings, and Lord of lords", Re 19:13-16.—*R.H. Ryland*.

Whole Psalm. This psalm hath two parts: in the former is the thanksgiving of faith and promise of praise, in hope of obtaining all which the church is here to pray for, (Ps 108:1-5). In the latter part is the prayer for preservation of the church, Ps 108:6, with confidence to be heard and helped, whatsoever impediment appear, against all who stand out against Christ's kingdom, whether within the visible church (Ps 108:7-8), or whether without, such as are professed enemies unto it, (Ps 108:9-11), which prayer is followed forth (Ps 108:12), and comfortably closed with assurance of the Church's victory by the assistance of God, Ps 108:13.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1. *O God, my heart is fixed.* The wheels of a chariot revolve, but the axletree turns not; the sails of a mill move with the wind, but the mill itself moves not; the earth is carried round its orbit, but its centre is fixed. So should a Christian be able, amidst changing scenes and changing fortunes, to say, "*O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.*"—*G.S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings", 1862.*

Verse 1. *My heart is fixed.* The prophet saith *his heart was ready*, so the old translation hath it; the new translation, "*My heart is fixed.*" The word in the Hebrew signifies, first, *ready*, or *prepared*. Then, secondly, it signifies *fixed*. We first fit, prepare a thing, sharpen it, before we drive it into the ground, and then drive it in and fix it. So ask seriously and often, that thy heart may be ready, and may also be fixed, and this by a *habit* which brings readiness and fixedness, as in other holy duties, so in that of meditation.—*Nathanael Ranew, in "Solitude improved by Divine Meditation," 1670.*

Verse 1. Meditation is a fixed duty. It is not a cursory work. Man's thoughts naturally labour with a great inconsistency; but meditation chains them, and fastens them upon some spiritual object. The soul when it meditates lays a command on itself, that the thoughts which are otherwise flitting and feathery should fix upon its object; and so this duty is very advantageous. As we know a garden which is watered with sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruit than when it is refreshed with a constant stream; so when our thoughts are sometimes on good things, and then run off; when they only take a glance of a holy object, and then flit away, there is not so much fruit brought into the soul. In meditation, then, there must be a fixing of the heart upon the object, a steeping the thoughts, as holy David: "*O God, my heart is fixed.*" We must view the holy object presented by meditation, as a limner who views some curious piece, and carefully heeds every shade, every line and colour; as the Virgin Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Indeed; meditation is not only the

busying the thoughts, but the centring of them; not only the employing of them, but the staking them down upon some spiritual affair. When the soul, meditating upon something divine, saith as the disciples in the transfiguration (Mt 17:4), "It is good to be here."—*John Wells, in the "Practical Sabbatarian,"* 1668.

Verse 1. *With my glory.* The parallel passage in the Prayer book version is, "with the best member I have." The tongue, being considered the best member, is here described as the *glory* of man—as that which tends to elevate him in the scale of creation; and therefore the pious man resolves to employ his speech in giving utterance to the goodness of God. God is glorified by the praise of his redeemed, and the instrument whereby it is effected is man's *glory*.—*The Quiver.*

Verses 1-2. As a man first tunes his instrument, and then playeth on it so should the holy servant of God first labour to bring his spirit, heart, and affections into a solid and settled frame for worship, and then go to work; *My heart is fixed*, or prepared firmly, *I will sing and give praise.* As the glory of man above the brute creatures, is that from a reasonable mind he can express what is his will by his tongue: so the glory of saints above other men, is to have a tongue directed by the heart, for expressing of God's praise: "*I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.*" Under typical terms we are taught to make use of all sanctified means for stirring of us up unto God's service: for this the psalmist intends, when he saith, *Awake psaltery and harp.* We ourselves must first be stirred up to make right use of the means, before the means can be fit to stir us up: therefore saith he, *I myself will awake right early.*—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1-5. After David has professed a purpose of praising God (Ps 108:1-3) he tells you, next, the proportion that is between the attributes which he praiseth in God, and his praise of him. The greatness of the attributes *mercy and truth* we have in Ps 108:4, *Thy truth reaches unto the clouds;* and there is an answerable greatness in his praises of God for them, Ps 108:5: *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth.* He wishes and endeavours to exalt him as high in his praises as he is in himself; to exalt him above the earth, above the heaven, and the clouds.—*Henry Jeanes.*

Verse 2. With reference to this passage the Talmud says, "A cithern used to hang above David's bed; and when midnight came the north wind blew among the strings, so that they sounded of themselves; and forthwith he arose and busied himself with the Torah until the pillar of the dawn ascended." Rashi observes, "The dawn awakes the other kings; but I, said David, will awake the dawn."—*Franz Delitzsch*

Verse 2. When the Hebrew captives were sitting in sorrow "by the waters of Babylon", they wept, and hung their harps on the willows, and could not be prevailed upon by the conquerors to sing "the songs of Zion in that land" (Ps 137:1,4). But when "the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, then was their mouth filled with laughter and their tongue with singing" (Ps 126:1-2). Then the *psaltery and*

harp of former generations *awoke* (Ps 108:2). The old songs revived on their lips, and the melodies of David acquired new charms for them.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 2. *Awake early.*

"Yet never sleep the sun up; prayer should
Dawn with the day, there are set awful hours
Between heaven and us; the manna was not good
After sun rising, for day sullies flowers."

—*Henry Vaughan*, 1621-1695.

Verse 4. *For thy mercy is great*, etc. His mercy is great—that mercy sung of lately (Ps 107:1,43). It is "from above the heavens" (Mymv-lem); *i.e.*, coming down to us as do drops of a fertilizing shower; even as the "Peace on earth", of Lu 2:14, was first "peace in heaven" (Lu 19:38).—*Andrew A. Bonar*.

Verse 4. The mercy of God was then great *above* the heavens, when the God man, Christ Jesus, was raised to the highest heavens, and the truth of our salvation established on the very throne of God.—*W. Wilson*.

Verses 4-5. There is more stuff and substance of good in the Lord's promises than the sharpest sighted saint did or can perceive; for when we have followed the promise, to find out all the truth which is in it, we meet with a cloud of unsearchable riches, and are forced to leave it there; for so much is included in this, *Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds*. The height of our praising of God is to put the work of praising God upon himself, and to point him out unto others as going about the magnifying of his own name, and to be glad for it, as here; *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and thy glory above all the earth*.—*David Dickson*.

Verses 4-6. There is great confidence here, and, as ever, mercy to the soul which knows itself and comes before truth. But, then, for its own deliverance and blessing it looks to the exalting of God. This shows it must be a holy, righteous exalting. "Be *thou* exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth; that thy beloved may be delivered." It is a blessed thought, and this is what faith has to lay hold of now, even in the time of trial, that our blessing and God's glory are one, only we must put his glory first.—*J.N. Darby*.

Verse 6. *That thy beloved may be delivered*, etc. The church is the Lord's "*beloved*", or the incorporation, more loved than anything else in the world, therefore here called, "*Thy beloved*." Because the church is God's beloved, the care of it should be most in our mind, and the love of the preservation of it should draw forth our prayer most in favour of it. "*That thy beloved may be delivered: save*."—*David Dickson*.

Verse 6. God being thus exalted according to the majesty of his truth, the special plea of the Spirit of Jesus, founded on the mercy which has throned itself above the heavens, is next urged (Ps 108:6) on behalf of the nation of his ancient love. *That thy beloved (ones) may be delivered, save with thy right*

hand and answer me. It is the Spirit of Immanuel that thus makes intercession for his well remembered people according to God. His land should be rid in due time of those who had burdened it with wickedness. For *God* had spoken in his holiness concerning the portion of his anointed.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 7. *God hath spoken* the word of assurance. This refers to all the words in which the land of their inheritance was defined, especially Ge 15:18 Ex 23:31 De 11:24, and that remarkable prediction concerning the perpetuity of David's line, 2Sa 7:1-17, which must have made a deep impression on his mind. From these passages it is evident that Aram as well as Edom was included in the full compass of the territory designed for Israel, and that David felt himself to be in the path of destiny when he was endeavouring to extend his sway from the river of Egypt to the great river, even the Euphrates. *In his holiness*, in the immutable integrity of his heart, which was an infallible guarantee for the fulfilment of his promise. *I will exult.* This is the exclamation of the representative head of the people, when he ponders upon the divine utterance.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 7. Faith closing with a promise, will furnish joy to the believer before he enjoys the performance of it: *God hath spoken*, saith he, *I will rejoice.*—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7. He, the second David, had accomplished his warfare, and had crowned himself with victory. Henceforth he would apportion the kingdoms of the world and subdue them unto himself at his own holy will. Ephraim and Judah, Moab and Philistia, the Jew first and then the Gentile, were to be brought to confess him as their Lord.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 8. *Ephraim also is the strength of mine head.* As Ephraim was the most populous of all the tribes, he appropriately terms it *the strength of his head*, that is, of his dominions.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9. *Moab*, who had enticed Israel to impurity, is made a vessel for its purifying. *Edom*, descendant of him who despised his birthright, is deprived of his independence;—for "flinging a shoe" was a sign of the transference of a prior claim on land. Ru 4:7.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9. *Moab is my washpot.* The office of washing the feet was in the East commonly performed by slaves, and the meanest of the family, as appears from what Abigail said to David when he took her to wife, "Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord", 1Sa 25:41; and from the fact of our Saviour washing his disciples' feet, to give them an example of humility, Joh 8:5. The word *niphtr*, used in this last passage, signifies in general a washing pot, and is put for the word *podoniptron*, the term which the Greeks, in strict propriety of speech, applied to a vessel for washing the feet. As this office was servile, so the vessels employed for this purpose were a mean part of household stuff. Gataker and Le Clerc illustrate this text from an anecdote related by Herodotus, concerning Amasis, king of Egypt, who expressed the meanness of his own origin by comparing himself to a pot for washing the feet in, (Herod. Lib. 2. c. 172). When, therefore, it is said, "*Moab is my washing pot*", the complete and servile subjection of Moab to David is strongly marked.

This is expressed, not by comparing Moab to a slave who performs the lowest offices, as presenting to his master the basin for washing his feet, but by comparing him to the mean utensil itself. See 2Sa 8:2 1Ch 18:1-2, 12-13.—*James Anderson's Note to Calvin on Isa 60:1-12.*

Verse 9. *Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast my shoe.* This somewhat difficult expression may be thus explained. Moab and Edom were to be reduced to a state of lowest vassalage to the people of God. The one was to be like a pot or tub fit only for washing the feet in, while the other was to be like the domestic slave standing by to receive the sandals thrown to him by the person about to perform his ablutions, that he might first put them by in a safe place, and then come and wash his master's feet.—*"Rays from the East."*

Verse 9. *Over Edom will I cast my shoe.* David overthrew their army in the "Valley of Salt", and his general, Joab, following up the victory, destroyed nearly the whole male population (1Ki 11:15-16), and placed Jewish garrisons in all the strongholds of Edom (2Sa 8:13-14). In honour of that victory the Psalmist warrior may have penned the words in Ps 60:8, "*Over Edom will I cast my shoe.*"—*J.L. Porter in, "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible."*

Verse 10. The strong city built on the rock, even man's hardened heart, stronger and more stony than the tomb, he had conquered and overcome; and in him and his might are his people to carry on his warfare, and to cast down all the strongholds of human pride, and human stubbornness, and human unrepentance.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 10-11. It is not conclusive evidence that we are not called to undertake a given work or perform a certain duty, because it is very difficult, or even impossible for us to succeed without special help from God. If God calls David to take Petra, he shall take Petra.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 11. *Wilt not thou, O God?* His hand shall lead him even to Petra, which seems unapproachable by human strength. That marvellous rock city of the Edomites is surrounded by rocks some of which are three hundred feet high, and a single path twelve in width leads to it. The city itself is partly hewn out of the cloven rocks, and its ruins, which however belong to a later period, fill travellers with amazement.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 11. He who came victorious from Edom, and with garments dyed in the blood of his passion from Bozrah, will henceforth now go forth with the armies of the true Israel,—for what are hosts without the Lord of hosts?—to subdue their enemy.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 12. *Give us help from trouble,* etc. He who would have God's help in any business, must quit confidence in man's help; and the seeing of the vanity of man's help must make the believer to trust the more unto, and expect the more confidently God's help, as here is done. "*Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.*"—*David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. Parts of two former psalms are here united in one.

1. Repetition is here sanctioned by inspiration.

(a) Of what? Of hymns, of prayers, of sermons.

(b) For what? For impression. "As we said before so say I now again, if any man preach", etc. For confirmation: "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice": they went through Syria and Cilicia again confirming the churches. For preservation: quotations authenticate originals, a writing in two copies is safer than in one.

2. Rearrangement is here sanctioned by inspiration.

(a) Different experiences may require it. Sometimes the heart is most fixed at the commencement of a spiritual exercise: sometimes at its close. Hence the commencement of one psalm is the close of another.

(b) Different occasions may require it. As of sorrow and joy. Two parts of two different hymns may better harmonise with a particular occasion than either one separately considered.—*G.R.*

Verse 1.

1. The best occupation: praise. Worthy—

(a) Of the heart in its best condition.

(b) Of the best faculties of the best educated man.

2. The best resolution.

(a) Arising from a fixed heart.

(b) Deliberately formed.

(c) Solemnly expressed.

(d) Joyfully executed.

3. The best results. To praise God makes a man both happier and holier, stronger and bolder—as the succeeding verses show.

Verse 2. The benefit of early rising. The sweetness of the Sabbath morning early prayer meeting.

Verse 3. We must not restrain praise because we are overheard by strangers, nor because the listeners are heathen, or ungodly, or are numerous, or are likely to oppose. There may be all the more reason for our outspoken praise of God when we are in such circumstances.

Verses 4-5. The greatness of mercy, the height of truth, and the immensity of the Divine praise.

Verse 6. The prayer of a representative man. There are times when to answer *me* is to deliver the church—at such times I have a powerful plea.

Verse 7. God's voice the cause of joy, the reason for action, the guarantee of success.

Verse 8. *Judah is my lawgiver.* Jesus the sole and only lawmaker in the church.

Verse 11. (*first clause*).—Confidence in a frowning God.

Verse 11. (*second clause*). Whether God will go forth with our hosts depends upon—Who they are?

What is their object? What is their motive and spirit? What weapons do they use? etc.

Verse 12. The failure of human help is often

1. The direct cause of our prayer.
2. The source of urgency in pleading.
3. A powerful argument for the pleader.
4. A distinct reason for hope to light upon.

Verse 13. How, when, and why a believer should do valiantly.

Psalm 109

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

To The Chief Musician. Intended therefore to be sung, and sung in the temple service! Yet is it by no means easy to imagine the whole nation singing such dreadful imprecations. We ourselves, at any rate, under the gospel dispensation, find it very difficult to infuse into the Psalm a gospel sense, or a sense at all compatible with the Christian spirit; and therefore one would think the Jews must have found it hard to chant such strong language without feeling the spirit of revenge excited; and the arousal of that spirit could never have been the object of divine worship in any period of time—under law or under gospel. At the very outset this title shows that the Psalm has a meaning with which it is fitting for men of God to have fellowship before the throne of the Most High: but what is that meaning? This is a question of no small difficulty, and only a very childlike spirit will ever be able to answer it.

A Psalm of David. Not therefore the ravings of a vicious misanthrope, or the execrations of a hot, revengeful spirit. David would not smite the man who sought his blood, he frequently forgave those who treated him shamefully; and therefore these words cannot be read in a bitter, revengeful sense, for that would be foreign to the character of the son of Jesse. The imprecatory sentences before us were penned by one who with all his courage in battle was a man of music and of tender heart, and they were meant to be addressed to God in the form of a Psalm, and therefore they cannot possibly have been meant to be mere angry cursing.

Unless it can be proved that the religion of the old dispensation was altogether hard, morose, and Draconian, and that David was of a malicious, vindictive spirit, it cannot be conceived that this Psalm contains what one author has ventured to call "a pitiless hate, a refined and insatiable malignity." To such a suggestion we cannot give place, no, not for an hour. But what else can we make of such

strong language? Truly this is one of the hard places of Scripture, a passage which the soul trembles to read; yet as it is a Psalm unto God, and given by inspiration, it is not ours to sit in judgment upon it, but to bow our ear to what God the Lord would speak to us therein.

This psalm refers to Judas, for so Peter quoted it; but to ascribe its bitter denunciations to our Lord in the hour of his sufferings is more than we dare to do. These are not consistent with the silent Lamb of God, who opened not his mouth when led to the slaughter. It may seem very pious to put such words into his mouth; we hope it is our piety which prevents our doing so. (See our first note from Perowne in the Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings.)

DIVISION. In the first five verses (Ps 109:1-5) David humbly pleads with God that he may be delivered from his remorseless and false hearted enemies. From Ps 109:6-20, filled with a prophetic fervour, which carries him entirely beyond himself, he denounces judgment upon his foes, and then from Ps 109:21-31 he returns to his communion with God in prayer and praise. The central portion of the Psalm in which the difficulty lies must be regarded not as the personal wish of the psalmist in cool blood, but as his prophetic denunciation of such persons as he describes, and emphatically of one special "son of perdition" whom he sees with prescient eye. We would all pray for the conversion of our worst enemy, and David would have done the same; but viewing the adversaries of the Lord, and doers of iniquity, *As Such, and as incorrigible* we cannot wish them well; on the contrary, we desire their overthrow, and destruction. The gentlest hearts burn with indignation when they hear of barbarities to women and children, of crafty plots for ruining the innocent, of cruel oppression of helpless orphans, and gratuitous ingratitude to the good and gentle. A curse upon the perpetrators of the atrocities in Turkey may not be less virtuous than a blessing upon the righteous. We wish well to all mankind, and for that very reason we sometimes blaze with indignation against the inhuman wretches by whom every law which protects our fellow creatures is trampled down, and every dictate of humanity is set at naught.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Hold not thy peace.* Mine enemies speak, be thou pleased to speak too. Break thy solemn silence, and silence those who slander me. It is the cry of a man whose confidence in God is deep, and whose communion with him is very close and bold. Note, that he only asks the Lord to speak: a word from God is all a believer needs. O God of my praise. Thou whom my whole soul praises, be pleased to protect my honour and guard my praise. "My heart is fixed", said he in the former psalm, "I will sing and give praise", and now he appeals to the God whom he had praised. If we take care of God's honour he will take care of ours. We may look to him as the guardian of our character if we truly seek his glory. If we live to God's praise, he will in the long run give us praise among men.

Verse 2. *For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me.* Wicked

men must needs say wicked things, and these we have reason to dread; but in addition they utter false and deceitful things, and these are worst of all. There is no knowing what may come out of mouths which are at once lewd and lying. The misery caused to a good man by slanderous reports no heart can imagine but that which is wounded by them: in all Satan's armoury there are no worse weapons than deceitful tongues. To have a reputation, over which we have watched with daily care, suddenly bespattered with the foulest aspersions, is painful beyond description; but when wicked and deceitful men get their mouths fully opened we can hardly expect to escape any more than others. They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. Lying tongues cannot lie still. Bad tongues are not content to vilify bad men, but choose the most gracious of saints to be the objects of their attacks. Here is reason enough for prayer. The heart sinks when assailed with slander, for we know not what may be said next, what friend may be alienated, what evil may be threatened, or what misery may be caused to us and others. The air is full of rumours, and shadows impalpable flit around; the mind is confused with dread of unseen foes, and invisible arrows. What ill can be worse than to be assailed with slander,

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
Out venoms all the worms of Nile"?

Verse 3. *They compassed me about also with words of hatred.* Turn which way he would they hedged him in with falsehood, misrepresentation, accusation, and scorn. Whispers, sneers, insinuations, satires, and open charges filled his ear with a perpetual buzz, and all for no reason, but sheer hate. Each word was as full of venom as an egg is full of meat: they could not speak without showing their teeth. And fought against me without a cause. He had not provoked the quarrel or contributed to it, yet in a thousand ways they laboured to "corrode his comfort, and destroy his ease." All this tended to make the suppliant feel the more acutely the wrongs which were done to him.

Verse 4. *For my love they are my adversaries.* They hate me because I love them. One of our poets says of the Lord Jesus—"Found guilty of excess of love." Surely it was his only fault. Our Lord might have used all the language of this complaint most emphatically—they hated him without a cause and returned him hatred for love. What a smart this is to the soul, to be hated in proportion to the gratitude which it deserved, hated by those it loved, and hated because of its love. This was a cruel case, and the sensitive mind of the psalmist writhed under it. But give myself unto prayer. He did nothing else but pray. He became prayer as they became malice. This was his answer to his enemies, he appealed from men and their injustice to the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. True bravery alone can teach a man to leave his traducers unanswered, and carry the case unto the Lord.

"Men cannot help but reverence the courage that walketh amid calumnies unanswering."

"He standeth as a gallant chief unheeding shot or shell."

Verse 5. *And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.* Evil for good is devil like.

This is Satan's line of action, and his children upon earth follow it greedily; it is cruel, and wounds to the quick. The revenge which pays a man back in his own coin has a kind of natural justice in it; but what shall be said of that baseness which returns to goodness the very opposite of what it has a right to expect? Our Lord endured such base treatment all his days, and, alas, in his members, endures it still. Thus we see the harmless and innocent man upon his knees pouring out his lamentation: we are now to observe him rising from the mercy seat, inspired with prophetic energy, and pouring forth upon his foes the forewarning of their doom. We shall hear him speak like a judge clothed with stern severity, or like the angel of doom robed in vengeance, or as the naked sword of justice when she bares her arm for execution. It is not for himself that he speaks so much as for all the slandered and the down trodden, of whom he feels himself to be the representative and mouthpiece. He asks for justice, and as his soul is stung with cruel wrongs he asks with solemn deliberation, making no stint in his demands. To pity malice would be malice to mankind; to screen the crafty seekers of human blood would be cruelty to the oppressed. Nay, love, and truth, and pity lift their wounds to heaven, and implore vengeance on the enemies of the innocent and oppressed; those who render goodness itself a crime, and make innocence a motive for hate, deserve to find no mercy from the great Preserver of men. Vengeance is the prerogative of God, and as it would be a boundless calamity if evil were for ever to go unpunished, so it is an unspeakable blessing that the Lord will recompense the wicked and cruel man, and there are times and seasons when a good man ought to pray for that blessing. When the Judge of all threatens to punish tyrannical cruelty and false hearted treachery, virtue gives her assent and consent. Amen, so let it be, saith every just man in his inmost soul.

Verse 6. *Set thou a wicked man over him.* What worse punishment could a man have? The proud man cannot endure the proud, nor the oppressor brook the rule of another like himself. The righteous in their patience find the rule of the wicked a sore bondage; but those who are full of resentful passions, and haughty aspirations, are slaves indeed when men of their own class have the whip hand of them. For Herod to be ruled by another Herod would be wretchedness enough, and yet what retribution could be more just? What unrighteous man can complain if he finds himself governed by one of like character? What can the wicked expect but that their rulers should be like themselves? Who does not admire the justice of God when he sees fierce Romans ruled by Tiberius and Nero, and Red Republicans governed by Marat and Robespierre? And let Satan stand at his right hand. Should not like come to like? Should not the father of lies stand near his children? Who is a better right hand friend for an adversary of the righteous than the great adversary himself? The curse is an awful one, but it is most natural that it should come to pass: those who serve Satan may expect to have his company, his assistance, his temptations, and at last his doom.

Verse 7. *When he shall be judged, let him be condemned.* He judged and condemned others in the vilest manner, he suffered not the innocent to escape; and it would be a great shame if in his time of

trial, being really guilty, he should be allowed to go free. Who would wish Judge Jeffries to be acquitted if he were tried for perverting justice? Who would desire Nero or Caligula to be cleared if set at the bar for cruelty? When Shylock goes into court, who wishes him to win his suit? And let his prayer become sin. It is sin already, let it be so treated. To the injured it must seem terrible that the black hearted villain should nevertheless pretend to pray, and very naturally do they beg that he may not be heard, but that his pleadings may be regarded as an addition to his guilt. He has devoured the widow's house, and yet he prays. He has put Naboth to death by false accusation and taken possession of his vineyard, and then he presents prayers to the Almighty. He has given up villages to slaughter, and his hands are red with the blood of babes and maidens, and then he pays his vows unto Allah! He must surely be accursed himself who does not wish that such abominable prayers may be loathed of heaven and written down as new sins. He who makes it a sin for others to pray will find his own praying become sin. When he at last sees his need of mercy, mercy herself shall resent his appeal as an insult. "Because that he remembered not to show mercy", he shall himself be forgotten by the God of grace, and his bitter cries for deliverance shall be regarded as mockeries of heaven.

Verse 8. *Let his days be few.* Who would desire a persecuting tyrant to live long? As well might we wish length of days to a mad dog. If he will do nothing but mischief the shortening of his life will be the lengthening of the world's tranquillity. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days",—this is bare justice to them, and great mercy to the poor and needy. And let another take his office. Perhaps a better man may come, at any rate it is time a change were tried. So used were the Jews to look upon these verses as the doom of traitors, of cruel and deceitful mind, that Peter saw at once in the speedy death of Judas a fulfilment of this sentence, and a reason for the appointment of a successor who should take his place of oversight. A bad man does not make an office bad: another may use with benefit that which he perverted to ill uses.

Verse 9. *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.* This would inevitably be the case when the man died, but the psalmist uses the words in an emphatic sense, he would have his widow "a widow indeed", and his children so friendless as to be orphaned in the bitterest sense. He sees the result of the bad man's decease, and includes it in the punishment. The tyrant's sword makes many children fatherless, and who can lament when his barbarities come home to his own family, and they too, weep and lament. Pity is due to all orphans and widows as such, but a father's atrocious actions may dry up the springs of pity. Who mourns that Pharaoh's children lost their father, or that Sennacherib's wife became a widow? As Agag's sword had made women childless none wept when Samuel's weapon made his mother childless among women. If Herod had been slain when he had just murdered the innocents at Bethlehem no man would have lamented it even though Herod's wife would have become a widow. These awful maledictions are not for common men to use, but for

judges, such as David was, to pronounce over the enemies of God and man. A judge may sentence a man to death whatever the consequences may be to the criminal's family, and in this there will be no feeling of private revenge, but simply the doing of justice because evil must be punished. We are aware that this may not appear to justify the full force of these expressions, but it should never be forgotten that the case supposed is a very execrable one, and the character of the culprit is beyond measure loathsome and not to be met by any common abhorrence. Those who regard a sort of effeminate benevolence to all creatures alike as the acme of virtue are very much in favour with this degenerate age; these look for the salvation of the damned, and even pray for the restoration of the devil. It is very possible that if they were less in sympathy with evil, and more in harmony with the thoughts of God, they would be of a far sterner and also of a far better mind. To us it seems better to agree with God's curses than with the devil's blessings; and when at any time our heart kicks against the terrors of the Lord we take it as a proof of our need of greater humbling, and confess our sin before our God.

Verse 10. *Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg.* May they have neither house nor home, settlement nor substance; and while they thus wander and beg may it ever be on their memory that their father's house lies in ruins,—let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. It has often been so: a race of tyrants has become a generation of beggars. Misused power and abused wealth have earned the family name universal detestation, and secured to the family character an entail of baseness. Justice herself would award no such doom except upon the supposition that the sin descended with the blood; but supreme providence which in the end is pure justice has written many a page of history in which the imprecation of this verse has been literally verified. We confess that as we read some of these verses we have need of all our faith and reverence to accept them as the voice of inspiration; but the exercise is good for the soul, for it educates our sense of ignorance, and tests our teachability. Yes, Divine Spirit, we can and do believe that even these dread words from which we shrink have a meaning consistent with the attributes of the Judge of all the earth, though his name is LOVE. How this may be we shall know hereafter.

Verse 11. *Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.* A doom indeed. Those who have once fallen into the hands of the usurer can tell you what this means: it were better to be a fly in the web of a spider. In the most subtle, worrying, and sweeping manner the extortioner takes away, piece by piece, his victim's estate, till not a fraction remains to form a pittance for old age. Baiting his trap, watching it carefully, and dexterously driving his victim into it, the extortioner by legal means performs unlawful deeds, *catches* his bird, strips him of every feather, and cares not if he die of starvation. He robs with law to protect him, and steals with the magistrate at his back: to fall into his clutches is worse than to be beset by professed thieves. And let the strangers spoil his labour,—so that his kindred may have none of it. What with hard creditors and pilfering strangers the estate must soon vanish! Extortion

drawing one way, and spoliation the other, a known moneylender and an unknown robber both at work, the man's substance would soon disappear, and rightly so, for it was gathered by shameless means. This too has been frequently seen. Wealth amassed by oppression has seldom lasted to the third generation: it was gathered by wrong and by wrong it is scattered, and who would decree that it should be otherwise? Certainly those who suffer beneath high handed fraud will not wish to stay the retribution of the Almighty, nor would those who see the poor robbed and trampled on desire to alter the divine arrangements by which such evils are recompensed even in this life.

Verse 12. *Let there be none to extend mercy unto him.* He had no mercy, but on the contrary, he crushed down all who appealed to him. Loath to smite him with his own weapon, stern justice can do no otherwise, she lifts her scales and sees that this, too, must be in the sentence. Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence, and yet as a matter of fact children do suffer for their father's sins, and, as long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so. So involved are the interests of the race, that it is quite impossible in all respects to view the father and the child apart. No man among us could desire to see the fatherless suffer for their deceased father's fault, yet so it happens, and there is no injustice in the fact. They share the parent's ill gotten gain or rank, and their aggrandizement is a part of the object at which he aimed in the perpetration of his crimes; to allow them to prosper would be an encouragement and reward of his iniquity; therefore, for these and other reasons, a man perishes not alone in his iniquity. The ban is on his race. If the man were innocent this would be a crime; if he were but commonly guilty it would be excessive retribution; but when the offence reeks before high heaven in unutterable abomination, it is little marvel that men devote the man's whole house to perpetual infamy, and that so it happeneth.

Verse 13. *Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.* Both from existence and from memory let them pass away till none shall know that such a vile brood ever existed. Who wishes to see the family of Domitian or Julian continued upon earth? Who would mourn if the race of Tom Paine or of Voltaire should come to an utter end? It would be undesirable that the sons of the utterly villainous and bloodthirsty should rise to honour, and if they did they would only revive the memory of their father's sins.

Verse 14. This verse is, perhaps, the most terrible of all, but yet as a matter of fact children do procure punishment upon their parents' sins, and are often themselves the means of such punishment. A bad son brings to mind his father's bad points of character; people say, "Ah, he is like the old man. He takes after his father." A mother's sins also will be sure to be called to mind if her daughter becomes grossly wicked. "Ah", they will say, "there is little wonder, when you consider what her mother was." These are matters of everyday occurrence. We cannot, however, pretend to explain the righteousness of this malediction, though we fully believe in it. We leave it till our heavenly Father

is pleased to give us further instruction. Yet, as a man's faults are often learned from his parents, it is not unjust that his consequent crimes should recoil upon him.

Verse 15. Again, he wishes that his father's sins may follow up the transgressor and assist to fill the measure of his own iniquities, so that for the whole accumulated load the family may be smitten with utter extinction. A king might justly wish for such an end to fall upon an incorrigible brood of rebels; and of persecutors, continuing in the same mind, the saints might well pray for their extinction; but the passage is dark; and we must leave it so. It must be right or it would not be here, but how we cannot see. Why should we expect to understand all things? Perhaps it is more for our benefit to exercise humility, and reverently worship God over a hard text, than it would be to comprehend all mysteries.

Verse 16. *Because that he remembered not to shew mercy.* Because he had no memory to show mercy the Judge of all will have a strong memory of his sins. So little mercy had he ever shown that he had forgotten how to do it, he was without common humanity, devoid of compassion, and therefore only worthy to be dealt with after the bare rule of justice. But persecuted the poor and needy man. He looked on poor men as a nuisance upon the earth, he ground their faces, oppressed them in their wages, and treated them as the mire of the streets. Should he not be punished, and in his turn laid low? All who know him are indignant at his brutalities, and will glory to see him overthrown. That he might even slay the broken in heart. He had malice in his heart towards one who was already sufficiently sorrowful, whom it was a superfluity of malignity to attack. Yet no grief excited sympathy in him, no poverty ever moved him to relent. No, he would kill the heart broken and rob their orphans of their patrimony. To him groans were music, and tears were wine, and drops of blood precious rubies. Would any man spare such a monster? Will it not be serving the ends of humanity if we wish him gone, gone to the throne of God to receive his reward? If he will turn and repent, well: but if not, such a up as tree ought to be felled and cast into the fire. As men kill mad dogs if they can, and justly too, so may we lawfully wish that cruel oppressors of the poor were removed from their place and office, and, as an example to others, made to smart for their barbarities.

Verse 17. *As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him.* Deep down in every man's soul the justice of the *lex talionis* is established. Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the psalmist and deserved by the crime. Surely the malicious man cannot complain if he is judged by his own rule, and has his corn measured with his own bushel. Let him have what he loved. They are his own chickens, and they ought to come home to roost. He made the bed, let him lie on it himself. As he brewed, so let him drink. So all men say as a matter of justice, and though the higher law of love overrides all personal anger, yet as against the base characters here described even Christian love would not wish to see the sentence mitigated. As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. He felt no joy in any man's good, nor would he lift a hand to do another a service, rather did he frown and fret when another prospered or mirth was heard under his window;

what, then, can we wish him? Blessing was wasted on him, he hated those who gently sought to lead him to a better mind; even the blessings of providence he received with murmurs and repinings, he wished for famine to raise the price of his corn, and for war to increase his trade. Evil was good to him, and good he counted evil. If he could have blasted every field of corn in the world he would have done so if he could have turned a penny by it, or if he could thereby have injured the good man whom he hated from his very soul. What can we wish for him? He hunts after evil, he hates good; he lays himself out to ruin the godly whom God has blessed, he is the devil's friend, and as fiendish as his patron; should things go well with such a being? Shall we "wish him good luck in the name of the Lord?" To invoke blessings on such a man would be to participate in his wickedness, therefore let blessing be far from him, so long as he continues what he now is.

Verses 18-19. He was so openly in the habit of wishing ill to others that he seemed to wear robes of cursing, therefore let it be as his raiment girded and belted about him, yea, let it enter as water into his bowels, and search the very marrow of his bones like a penetrating oil. It is but common justice that he should receive a return for his malice, and receive it in kind, too.

Verse 20. This is the summing up of the entire imprecation, and fixes it upon the persons who had so maliciously assailed the inoffensive man of God. David was a man of gentle mould, and remarkably free from the spirit of revenge, and therefore we may here conceive him to be speaking as a judge or as a representative man, in whose person great principles needed to be vindicated and great injuries redressed. Thousands of God's people are perplexed with this psalm, and we fear we have contributed very little towards their enlightenment, and perhaps the notes we have gathered from others, since they display such a variety of view, may only increase the difficulty. What then? Is it not good for us sometimes to be made to feel that we are not yet able to understand all the word and mind of God? A thorough bewilderment, so long as it does not stagger our faith, may be useful to us by confounding our pride, arousing our faculties, and leading us to cry, "What I know not teach thou me."

Verse 21. *But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake.* How eagerly he turns from his enemies to his God! He sets the great THOU in opposition to all his adversaries, and you see at once that his heart is at rest. The words are very indistinct and though our version may not precisely translate them, yet it in a remarkable manner hits upon the sense and upon the obscurity which hangs over it. "Do thou for me"—what shall he do? Why, do whatever he thinks fit. He leaves himself in the Lord's hands, dictating nothing, but quite content so long as his God will but undertake for him. His plea is not his own merit, but *the name*. The saints have always felt this to be their most mighty plea. God himself has performed his grandest deeds of grace for the honour of his name, and his people know that this is the most potent argument with him. What the Lord himself has guarded with sacred jealousy we should reverence with our whole hearts and rely upon without distrust. "Because

thy mercy is good, deliver thou me." Not because I am good, but because thy mercy is good: see how the saints fetch their pleadings in prayer from the Lord himself. God's mercy is the star to which the Lord's people turn their eye when they are tossed with tempest and not comforted, for the peculiar bounty and goodness of that mercy have a charm for weary hearts. When man has no mercy we shall still find it in God. When man would devour we may look to God to deliver. His name and his mercy are two firm grounds for hope, and happy are those who know how to rest upon them.

Verse 22. *For I am poor and needy.* When he does plead anything about himself he urges not his riches or his merits, but his poverty and his necessities: this is gospel supplication, such as only the Spirit of God can indite upon the heart. This lowliness does not comport with the supposed vengeful spirit of the preceding verses: there must therefore be some interpretation of them which would make them suitable in the lips of a lowly minded man of God. And my heart is wounded within me. The Lord has always a tender regard to broken hearted ones, and such the psalmist had become: the undeserved cruelty, the baseness, the slander of his remorseless enemies had pierced him to the soul, and this sad condition he pleads as a reason for speedy help. It is time for a friend to step in when the adversary cuts so deep. The case has become desperate without divine aid; now, therefore, is the Lord's time.

Verse 23. *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.* I am a mere shadow, a shadow at the vanishing point, when it stretches far, but is almost lost in the universal gloom of evening which settles over all, and so obliterates the shadows cast by the setting sun. Lord, there is next to nothing left of me, wilt thou not come in before I am quite gone? I am tossed up and down as the locust, which is the sport of the winds, and must go up or down as the breeze carries it. The psalmist felt as powerless in his distress as a poor insect, which a child may toss up and down at its pleasure. He entreats the divine pity, because he had been brought to this forlorn and feeble condition by the long persecution which his tender heart had endured. Slander and malice are apt to produce nervous disorders and to lead on to pining diseases. Those who use these poisoned arrows are not always aware of the consequences; they scatter fire brands and death and say it is sport.

Verse 24. *My knees are weak through fasting;* either religious fasting, to which he resorted in the dire extremity of his grief, or else through loss of appetite occasioned by distress of mind. Who can eat when every morsel is soured by envy? This is the advantage of the slanderer, that he feels nothing himself, while his sensitive victim can scarcely eat a morsel of bread because of his sensitiveness. However, the good God knoweth all this, and will succour his afflicted. The Lord who bids *us* confirm the feeble knees will assuredly do it himself. "And my flesh faileth of fatness." He was wasted to a skeleton, and as his body was emaciated, so was his soul bereft of comfort: he was pining away, and all the while his enemies saw it and laughed at his distress. How pathetically he states his case; this is one of the truest forms of prayer, the setting forth of our sorrow before the Lord. Weak knees are

strong with God, and failing flesh has great power in pleading.

Verse 25. *I became also a reproach unto them.* They made him the theme of ridicule, the butt of their ribald jests: his emaciation by fasting made him a tempting subject for their caricatures and lampoons. When they looked upon me they shook their heads. Words were not a sufficient expression of their scorn, they resorted to gestures which were meant both to show their derision and to irritate his mind. Though these things break no bones, yet they do worse, for they break and bruise far tenderer parts of us. Many a man who could have answered a malicious speech, and so have relieved his mind, has felt keenly a sneer, a putting out of the tongue, or some other sign of contempt. Those, too, who are exhausted by such fasting and wasting, as the last verse describes (Ps 109:31) are generally in a state of morbid sensibility, and therefore feel more acutely the unkindness of others. What they would smile at during happier seasons becomes intolerable when they are in a highly nervous condition.

Verse 26. *Help me, O LORD my God.* Laying hold of Jehovah by the appropriating word *my*, he implores his aid both to help him to bear his heavy load and to enable him to rise superior to it. He has described his own weakness, and the strength and fury of his foes, and by these two arguments he urges his appeal with double force. This is a very rich, short, and suitable prayer for believers in any situation of peril, difficulty, or sorrow. O save me according to thy mercy. As thy mercy is, so let thy salvation be. The measure is a great one, for the mercy of God is without bound. When man has no mercy it is comforting to fall back upon God's mercy. Justice to the wicked is often mercy to the righteous, and because God is merciful he will save his people by overthrowing their adversaries.

Verse 27. *That they may know that this is thy hand.* Dolts as they are, let the mercy shown to me be so conspicuous that they shall be forced to see the Lord's agency in it. Ungodly men will not see God's hand in anything if they can help it, and when they see good men delivered into their power they become more confirmed than ever in their atheism; but all in good time God will arise and so effectually punish their malice and rescue the object of their spite that they will be compelled to say like the Egyptian magicians, "this is the finger of God." That thou, LORD, hast done it. There will be no mistaking the author of so thorough a vindication, so complete a turning of the tables.

Verse 28. *Let them curse, but bless thou, or, they will curse and thou wilt bless.* Their cursing will then be of such little consequence that it will not matter a straw. One blessing from the Lord will take the poison out of ten thousand curses of men. When they arise, let them be ashamed. They lift up themselves to deal out another blow, to utter another falsehood, and to watch for its injurious effects upon their victim, but they see their own defeat and are filled with shame. But let thy servant rejoice. Not merely as a man protected and rescued, but as God's servant in whom his master's goodness and glory are displayed when he is saved from his foes. It ought to be our greatest joy that the Lord is honoured in our experience; the mercy itself ought not so much to rejoice us as the glory which is

thereby brought to him who so graciously bestows it.

Verse 29. *Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame.* It is a prophecy as well as a wish, and may be read both in the indicative and the imperative. Where sin is the underclothing, shame will soon be the outer vesture. He who would clothe good men with contempt shall himself be clothed with dishonour. And let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a *mantle*. Let their confusion be broad enough to wrap them all over from head to foot, let them bind it about them and hide themselves in it, as being utterly afraid to be seen. Now they walk abroad unblushingly and reveal their own wickedness, acting as if they either had nothing to conceal or did not care whether it was seen or no; but they will be of another mind when the great Judge deals with them, then will they entreat mountains to hide them and hills to fall upon them, that they may not be seen: but all in vain, they must be dragged to the bar with no other covering but their own confusion.

Verse 30. *I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth.* Enthusiastically, abundantly, and loudly will he extol the righteous Lord, who redeemed him from all evil; and that not only in his own chamber or among his own family, but in the most public manner. Yea, I will praise him among the multitude. Remarkable and public providence demand public recognition, for otherwise men of the world will judge us to be ungrateful. We do not praise God to be heard of men, but as a natural sense of justice leads every one to expect to hear a befriended person speak well of his benefactor, we therefore have regard to such natural and just expectations, and endeavour to make our praises as public as the benefit we have received. The singer in the present case is the man whose heart was wounded within him because he was the laughing stock of remorseless enemies; yet now he praises, praises greatly, praises aloud, praises in the teeth of all gainsayers, and praises with a right joyous spirit. Never let us despair, yea, never let us cease to praise.

Verse 31. *For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor.* God will not be absent when his people are on their trial; he will hold a brief for them and stand in court as their advocate, prepared to plead on their behalf. How different is this from the doom of the ungodly who has Satan at his right hand (Ps 109:6). To save him from those that condemn his soul. The court only met as a matter of form, the malicious had made up their minds to the verdict, they judged him guilty, for their hate condemned him, yea, they pronounced sentence of damnation upon the very soul of their victim: but what mattered it? The great King was in court, and their sentence was turned against themselves. Nothing can more sweetly sustain the heart of a slandered believer than the firm conviction that God is near to all who are wronged, and is sure to work out their salvation. O Lord, save us from the severe trial of slander: deal in thy righteousness with all those who spitefully assail the characters of holy men, and cause all who are smarting under calumny and reproach to come forth unsullied from the affliction, even as did thine only begotten Son. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Mysterious was the one word written opposite this psalm in the pocket Bible of a late devout and popular writer. It represents the utter perplexity with which it is very generally regarded.—*Joseph Hammond.*

Whole Psalm. In this psalm David is supposed to refer to Doeg the Edomite, or to Ahithophel. It is the most imprecatory of the psalms, and may well be termed *the Iscariot Psalm*. What David here refers to his mortal enemy, finds its accomplishment in the betrayer of the Son of David. It is from the 8th verse that Peter infers the necessity of filling up the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas: it was, says he, predicted that another should take his office.—*Paton J. Gloag, in "A Commentary on the Acts," 1870.*

Whole Psalm. We may consider Judas, at the same time, as the virtual head of the Jewish nation in their daring attempt to dethrone the Son of God. The doom pronounced, and the reasons for it, apply to the Jews as a nation, as well as to the leader of the band who took Jesus.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm. Is it possible that this perplexing and distressing Psalm presents us after all, not with David's maledictions upon his enemies, but with their maledictions upon him? Not only do I hold this interpretation to be quite legitimate, I hold it to be by far the more natural and reasonable interpretation.—*Joseph Hammond.* (In Dr. Cox's *Expositor*, Vol. 2. pg 225, this theory is well elaborated by Mr. Hammond, but we cannot for an instant accept it.—*C.H.S.*)

The Imprecations of the Psalm. The language has been justified, not as the language of David, but as the language of Christ, exercising his office of Judge, or, in so far as he had laid aside that office during his earthly life, calling upon his Father to accomplish the curse. It has been alleged that this is the prophetic foreshadowing of the solemn words, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Mt 26:24). The curse in the words of Chrysostom is, "a prophecy in the form of a curse", (*profhteia en eidei arav*). The strain which such a view compels us to put on much of the language ought to have led long since to its abandonment. Not even the words denounced by our Lord against the Pharisees can really be compared to the anathemas which are here strung together. Much less is there any pretence for saying that those words so full of deep and holy sorrow, addressed to the traitor in the gospels, are merely another expression of the appalling denunciations of the psalm. But terrible as these undoubtedly are, to be accounted for by the spirit of the Old Dispensation, not to be defended by that of the New, still let us learn to estimate them aright.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

The Imprecations. These imprecations are not appropriate in the mouth of the suffering Saviour. It is not the spirit of Zion but of Sinai which here speaks out of the mouth of David; the spirit of Elias, which, according to Lu 9:58, is not the spirit of the New Testament. This wrathful spirit is overpowered by the spirit of love. But these anathemas are still not on this account so many beatings

of the air. There is in them a divine energy, as in the blessing and cursing of every man who is united to God, and more especially of a man whose temper of mind is such as David's. They possess the same power as the prophetic threatenings, and in this sense they are regarded in the New Testament as fulfilled in the son of perdition (Joh 17:12). To the generation of the time of Jesus they were a deterrent warning not to offend against the Holy One of God, and this *Psalmus Ischarioticus* (Ac 1:20) will ever be such a mirror of warning to the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his church.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

The Imprecations. Respecting the imprecations contained in this psalm, it will be proper to keep in mind what I have said elsewhere, that when David forms such maledictions, or expresses his desire for them, he is not instigated by any immoderate carnal propensity, nor is he actuated by zeal without knowledge, nor is he influenced by any private personal considerations. These three matters must be carefully weighed, for in proportion to the amount of self esteem which a man possesses, is he so enamoured with his own interests as to rush headlong upon revenge. Hence it comes to pass that the more a person is devoted to selfishness, he will be the more immoderately addicted to advancement of his own individual interests. This desire for the promotion of personal interest gives birth to another species of vice: for no one wishes to be avenged upon his enemies because such a thing would be right and equitable, but because it is the means of gratifying his own spiteful propensity. Some, indeed, make a pretext of righteousness and equity in the matter; but the spirit of malignity, by which they are inflamed, effaces every trace of justice, and blinds their minds. When the two vices, selfishness and carnality, are corrected, there is still another thing demanding correction: we must repress the ardour of foolish zeal, in order that we may follow the Spirit of God as our guide. Should any one, under the influence of perverse zeal, produce David as an example of it, that would not be an example in point; for to such a person may be very aptly applied the answer which Christ returned to his disciples, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of", Lu 9:55. How detestable a piece of sacrilege is it on the part of the monks, and especially the Franciscan friars, to pervert this psalm by employing it to countenance the most nefarious purposes! If a man harbour malice against a neighbour, it is quite a common thing for him to engage one of these wicked wretches to curse him, which he would do by daily repeating this psalm. I know a lady in France who hired a parcel of these friars to curse her own and only son in these words. But I return to David, who, free from all inordinate passion, breathed forth his prayers under the influence of the Holy Spirit.—*John Calvin*.

The imprecations. It is possible, as Tholuck thinks, that in some of the utterances in what are called the *vindictive psalms*, especially the imprecations in Ps 109:1-31, unholy personal zeal may have been mingled with holy zeal, as was the case seemingly with the two disciples James and John, when the Lord chided their desire for vengeance (Lu 9:54-56). But, in reality, the feeling expressed in these psalms may well be considered as virtuous anger, such as Bishop Butler explains and justifies

in his sermons on "Resentment and the Forgiveness of Injuries", and such as Paul teaches in Eph 4:26, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Anger against sin and a desire that evildoers may be punished, are not opposed to the spirit of the gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord both enjoined and exemplified. If the emotion or its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ and the perverter of the gospel to be accursed (anayema, 1Co 16:22 Ga 1:8); and especially, how could the spirit of the martyred saints in heaven call on God for vengeance (Re 6:10), and join to celebrate its final execution (Re 19:1-6)? Yea, resentment against the wicked is so far from being necessarily sinful, that we find it manifested by the Holy and Just One himself, when in the days of his flesh he looked around on his hearers "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (Mr 3:5); and when in "the great day of his wrath" (Re 6:17), he shall say to "all workers of iniquity" (Lu 13:27), "Depart from me, ye cursed" (Mt 25:41).—*Benjamin Davies* (1814-1875), in *Kitto's Cyclopaedia*.

Imprecations. It is true that this vengeance is invoked on the head of the betrayer of Christ: and we may profit by reading even the severest of the passages when we regard them as dictated by a burning zeal for the honour of Jehovah, a righteous indignation and a jealousy of love, and generally, if not universally, as denunciations of just judgment against the obstinate enemies of Christ, and all who obey not the Gospel of God. At the same time, these passages cannot be fully accounted for without a frank recognition of the fact that the Psalter was conceived and written under the Old Covenant. That dispensation was more stern than ours. God's people had with all other peoples a conflict with sword and spear. They wanted to tread down their enemies, to crush the heathen; and thought it a grand religious triumph for a righteous man to wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. Ps 8:10 68:23. Now the struggle is without carnal weapons, and the tone of the dispensation is changed.—*Donald Fraser*. 1873.

Imprecations. Imprecations of judgment on the wicked *on the hypothesis their continued impenitence* are not inconsistent with simultaneous efforts of to bring them to repentance; and Christian charity itself can do no more than labour for the sinner's conversion. The law of holiness requires us to pray for the fires of divine retribution: the law of love to seek meanwhile to rescue the brand from the burning. The last prayer of the martyr Stephen was answered not by any general averting of doom from a guilty nation, but by the conversion of an individual persecutor to the service of God.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

Imprecations. That explanation which regards the "enemies" as spiritual foes has a large measure of truth. It commended itself to a mind so far removed from mysticism as Arnold's. It is most valuable for devout private use of the Psalter. For, though we are come to Mount Sion, crested with the eternal calm, the opened ear can hear the thunder rolling along the peaks of Sinai. In the Gospel, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sin is utterly hateful to

God. The broad gates are flung wide open of the city that lies foursquare towards all the winds of heaven; for its ruler is divinely tolerant. But there shall in no wise enter it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination; for he is divinely intolerant too. And thus when, in public or private, we read these Psalms of imprecation, there is a lesson that comes home to us. We must read them, or dishonour God's word. Reading them, we must depart from sin, or pronounce judgment upon ourselves. Drunkenness, impurity, hatred, every known sin of flesh or spirit—these, and not mistaken men, are the worst enemies of God and of his Christ. Against these we pray in our Collects for Peace at Morning and Evening prayer—"Defend us in all assaults of our enemies, that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness." These were the dark hosts which swept through the Psalmist's vision when he cried, "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed", Ps 6:10.—*William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity", 1877.*

Imprecations. I cannot forbear the following little incident that occurred the other morning at family worship. I happened to be reading one of the imprecatory psalms, and as I paused to remark, my little boy, a lad of ten years, asked with some earnestness: "Father, do you think it right for a good man to pray for the destruction of his enemies like that?" and at the same time referred me to Christ as praying for his enemies. I paused a moment to know how to shape the reply so as to fully meet and satisfy his enquiry, and then said, "My son, if an assassin should enter the house by night, and murder your mother, and then escape, and the sheriff and citizens were all out in pursuit, trying to catch him, would you not pray to God that they might succeed and arrest him, and that he might be brought to justice?" "Oh, yes!" said he, "but I never saw it so before. I did not know that that was the meaning of these Psalms." "Yes", said I, "my son, the men against whom David plays were bloody men, men of falsehood and crime, enemies to the peace of society, seeking his own life, and unless they were arrested and their wicked devices defeated, many innocent persons must suffer." The explanation perfectly satisfied his mind.—*F.G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged", 1856.*

Title. It is worth noting, that the superscription, *to the chief Musician*, to the precentor (xunml), proves it to have been designed, such as it is, for the Tabernacle or Temple service of song.—*Joseph Hammond, in "The Expositor," 1875.*

Title. *Syriac inscription.* The verbs of the Hebrew text through nearly the whole of the imprecatory part of this Psalm are read in the singular number, as if some particular subject were signified by the divine prophet. But our translators always change the verbs into the plural number; which is not done by the Seventy and the other translators, who adhere more closely to the Hebrew text. But without doubt this has arisen, because the Syriac Christians explain this Psalm of the sufferings of Christ, which may be understood from the Syriac inscription of this Psalm, and which in Polyglottis Angl.

reads thus:—"Of David: when they made Absalom king, be not knowing: and on account of this he was killed. But to us it sets forth the sufferings of Christ." For this reason all these imprecations are transferred to the enemies or murderers of Jesus Christ.—*John Augustus Dathe, 1731-1791.*

Verse 1. *Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.* All commendation or manifestation of our innocence is to be sought from God when we are assailed with calumnies on all sides. When God is silent, we should cry all the more strongly; nor should we because of such delay despair of help, nor impatiently cease from praying.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1. *Hold not thy peace.* How appropriately this phrase is applied to God, with whom *to speak* is the same as *to do*; for by his word he made all things. Rightly, therefore, is he said to be silent when he seems not to notice the things which are done by the wicked, and patiently bears with their malice. The Psalmist begs him to rise up and speak with the wicked in his wrath, and thus take deserved vengeance on them; which is as easy for him to do as for an angry man to break forth in words of rebuke and blame. This should be to us a great solace against the wickedness of this last age, which God, our praise, can restrain with one little word.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1. *O God.* As the most innocent and holy servants of God are subject to heavy slanders and false calumnies raised against them, so the best remedy and relief in this case is to go to God, as here the Psalmist doth.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1. *God of my praise.* Thou, who art the constant object of my praise and thanksgiving, Jer 17:14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 1. *O God of my praise.* In denominating him *the God of his praise*, he intrusts to him the vindication of his innocence, in the face of the calumnies by which he was all but universally assailed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1. *The God of MY praise.* Give me leave, in order to expound it the better, to expostulate. What, David, were there no saints but thyself that gave praise to God? Why dost thou then seem to appropriate and engross God unto thyself, as the God of thy praise, as if none praised him else but thee? It is because his soul had devoted all the praise he was able to bestow on any, unto the Lord alone; as whom he had set himself to praise, and praise alone. As of a beloved son we use to say, "the son of my love." And further, it is as if he had said, If I had all the ability of all the spirits of men and angels wherewith to celebrate him, I would bestow them all on him, he is the God of my praise. And as he was David's, so he should be ours.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2. *For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me. Speak,* says Arnobius, to thine own conscience, O man of God, thou who art following Christ; and when the mouth of the wicked and deceitful man is opened concerning thee, rejoice and be secure; because while the mouth of the wicked is opened for thy slander in the earth, the mouth of God is opened for thy praise in heaven.—*Lorinus.*

Verses 2-3. Note, first, the detractor opens his mouth, that he may pour forth his poison, and that he may devour his victim. Hence, David says, "the mouth of the wicked is opened against me." Note, secondly, the detractor is talkative—*They have spoken*, etc. The mouth of the detractor is a broken pitcher leaking all over. Note, thirdly, detraction springs from hatred, "they compassed me about also *with words of hatred*." In Greek, ekuklwoan me, *ie.*, as in a circle they have enclosed me. St. Climacus says, "Detraction is *odii partus*, a subtle disease, a fat but hidden leech which sucks the blood of charity and after destroys it."—*Lorinus*.

Verse 2-5. *The mouth of the wicked, etc.*

Vice—deformed

Itself, and ugly, and of flavour rank—

To rob fair Virtue of so sweet an incense

And with it to anoint and salve its own

Rotten ulcers, and perfume the path that led

To death, strove daily by a thousand means:

And oft succeeded to make Virtue sour

In the world's nostrils, and its loathly self

Smell sweetly. Rumour was the messenger

Of defamation, and so swift that none

Could be the first to tell an evil tale.

It was Slander filled her mouth with lying words;

Slander, the foulest whelp of Sin. The man

In whom this spirit entered was undone.

His tongue was set on fire of hell; his heart

Was black as death; his legs were faint with haste

To propagate the lie his tongue had framed

His pillow was the peace of families

Destroyed, the sigh of innocence reproached,

Broken friendships, and the strife of brotherhoods.

Yet did he spare his sleep, and hear the clock

Number the midnight watches, on his bed

Devising mischief more; and early rose

And made most hellish meals of good men's names.

Peace fled the neighbourhood in which he made

His haunts; and, like a moral pestilence,

Before his breath the healthy shoots and blooms

Of social joy and happiness decayed.
Fools only in his company were seen,
And those forsaken of God, and to themselves
Given up. The prudent man shunned him and his house
As one who had a deadly moral plague.

—*Robert Pollok.*

Verse 3. Although an individual may be absent, so that he cannot corporeally be encompassed and fought with; nevertheless, so great is the force and malice of an envenomed tongue, that an absent man may be none the less dangerously surrounded and warred against. Thus David, though absent and driven into exile, was nevertheless surrounded and assailed by the calumnies of Doeg and the other flatterers of Saul, so that at length he was also corporeally surrounded; in which contest he would clearly have perished unless he had been divinely delivered: see 1Sa 23:1-29. And this kind of surrounding and assault is so much the more deadly as it is so much the less possible to be avoided. For who can be so innocent as to escape the snares of a back biting and calumnious tongue? What place can be so remote and obscure as that this evil will not intrude when David could not be safe in the mountains and caves of the rocks?—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 4. (first clause). None prove worse enemies than those that have received the greatest kindnesses, when once they turn unkind. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the purest wine, and pleasant meats turn to the bitterest humours in the stomach; so the highest love bestowed upon friends, being ill digested or corrupt, turns to the most unfriendly hatred, *proximorum odia sunt acerrima.*—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 4. *For my love they are my adversaries;* that's an ill requital; but how did David requite them? We may take his own word for it; he tells us how, "*But I give myself unto prayer*"; yea, he seemed a man wholly given unto prayer. The elegant conciseness of the Hebrew is, "*But I prayer*"; we supply it thus, "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" They are sinning against me, requiting my love with hatred, "*But I give myself unto prayer.*" But for whom did he pray? Doubtless he prayed and prayed much for himself; he prayed also for them. We may understand these words, "*I give myself unto prayer*", two ways. First I pray against their plots and evil dealings with me (prayer was David's best strength always against his enemies), yet that was not all. But, secondly, "*I give myself unto prayer*", that the Lord would pardon their sin, and turn their hearts, when they are doing me mischief; or, though they have done me mischief, I am wishing them the best good. David (in another place) showed what a spirit of charity he was clothed with, when no reproof could hinder him from praying for others, Ps 141:5.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4. The translator of the Syriac version has inserted in Ps 109:4 *Arabic* "*and I have prayed for them*", as if he had copied them from the words of our Lord in Mt 5:44, where in the Syriac version of

the New Testament we have exactly the same construction. It is in keeping with the inscription of the Psalm, which applies it directly to Christ. It would seem as if the Translator understood this verse of the crucifixion and of the Redeemer's prayer for his murderers, or as if the only way to understand the elliptical language of the Psalmist was from the teaching and example of our Lord.—*E.T. Gibson, of Crayford.*

Verse 4. *I prayer.* The Messiah says in this prophetic psalm, "I am prayer." During his pilgrimage on earth, his whole life was communion with God; and now in his glory, he is constantly making intercession for us. But this does not exhaust the idea, "*I am prayer.*" He not merely prayed and is now praying, he not merely teaches and influences us to pray, but he is prayer, the fountain and source of all prayer, as well as the foundation and basis of all answers to our petitions. He is the Word in this sense also. From all eternity his Father heard him, heard him as interceding for that world which, created through him, he represented, and in which, through him, divine glory was to be revealed. In the same sense, therefore, in which he is light and gives light, in which he is life and resurrection, and therefore quickens, *Jesus is prayer.*—*Adolph Saphir, in Lectures on the Lord's Prayer, 1870.*

Verse 4. Persecuted saints are men of prayer, yea, they are as it were made up all of prayer. David prayed before; but, oh, when his enemies fell a persecuting of him, then he gave himself up wholly to prayer. Oh, then he was more earnest; more fervent, more frequent, more diligent, more constant, and more abundant in the work of prayer! When Numa, king of the Romans, was told that his enemies were in arms against him, he did but laugh at it, and answered, "And I do sacrifice"; so when persecutors arm themselves against the people of God, they do but divinely smile and laugh at it, and give themselves the more up to prayer. When men arm against them, then they arm themselves with all their might to the work of prayer; and woe, woe to them that have armies of prayers marching against them.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 4. *I give myself unto prayer.* The instruction to ourselves from these words is most comforting and precious. Are we bowed down with sorrow and distress? "*I give myself unto prayer.*" Are we persecuted, and reviled, and compassed about with words of hatred? "*I give myself unto prayer.*" Has death entered our dwellings? And as we gaze in heart-broken anguish on the no longer answering look of one who was our earthly stay, and we feel as if all hope as well as all help were gone, still there remains the same blessed refuge for all the Lord's sorrowing ones, "*I give myself unto prayer.*" In the allegory of the ancients. Hope was left at the bottom of the casket, as the sweetener of human life; but God, in far richer mercy, gives prayer as the balm of human trial.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 4. A Christian is all over prayer: he prays at rising, at lying down, and as he walks: like a prime favourite at court, who has the key to the privy stairs, and can wake his prince by night.—*Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778.*

Verse 6. *Set thou a wicked man over him*, etc. Here commences that terrible series of maledictions, unparalleled in Holy Writ, as directed against an individual sinner, albeit it is little more than a special reduplication of the national woes denounced in Le 26:1-46 and De 28:1-68.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 6. *Set thou a wicked man over him*. The first thing that the Psalmist asks is, that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself:—a man regardless of justice, truth, and right; a man who would respect character and propriety no more than he had himself done. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished *in the line of his offences*. It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts, for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavouring to secure.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 6. *Over HIM*. Consider what would have been the effect if these denunciations had been made against the *sins* of men and not, as they are in these passages, against the *sinner*s. Men would have said, "My sin is denounced, not *me*." What a license would have been given to sin! The depraved nature would have said, "if *I* am not condemned, but only my *sin*, I can do as I like; I shall not be called to account for it. I *love* sin and can go on in it." This is what men would have said. There would have been no effort to get rid of it. Why should there be; if only *sin* is condemned and not the *sinner*? But man's *sin* is identified with *himself*, and this makes him tremble. God's wrath rests on *him* because of his sin. Condemnation is awaiting *him* because of his sin. This makes him anxious to get rid of it.—*Frederick Whitfield*.

Verse 6. *Let Satan stand at his right hand*. It appears to have been the custom at trials before the Jewish tribunals for a pleader to stand at the right hand of the accused: See Zec 3:1, where are described Joshua the High Priest, standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and the adversary (Njs, *Satan*, as here) standing at his right hand to oppose him. See also Ps 109:31.—*John Le Clerc*, 1657-1736.

Verse 6. *Let Satan stand at his right hand*. Hugo observes that the Devil is on the left hand of those whom he persecutes in temporal things: on the right of those whom he rules in spiritual things: before the face of those who are on their guard against his wiles: behind those who are not foreseeing and prudent: above those whom he treads down: below, and beneath the feet of those who tread him down. A recent Spanish author, (Peter Vega. *On the Penitential Psalms*.) writing in that language, thinks that there cannot be anything worse than that man who diligently and of set purpose injures others by speaking deceitfully, by surrounding with speeches of hatred, by attacking without cause, by slandering, by returning evil for good, and hatred for love: therefore, in this place it is desired that a wicked man may be set over such a one, and the devil at his right hand; as if he should be doomed to take the lowest place because he is the worst.—*Lorinus*.

Verse 6. *At his right hand*. The strength or force of the body shows itself principally in the right hand.

Therefore, he who wishes to obstruct another, and to hinder his endeavour, stands at his right hand; and thus easily parries his stroke or attempt. This I consider to be the most simple meaning of this passage which shows that God represses and restrains the raging of the enemies of the Church, who withstand each other by their opposing efforts, either from envy or from other causes. Thus, 2Sa 17:1-29, the counsels of Ahithophel are broken by Hushai; and in our day we see that the counsels and attempts of our enemies have been frequently and wonderfully restrained by the hindrances they have give one to the other: in which matter the goodness of God is to be discerned.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6. He begins to prophesy what they should receive for their great impiety, detailing their lot in such a manner as if he wished its realization from a desire of revenge: while he declareth what was to happen with the most absolute certainty, and what of God's justice would worthily come upon such. Some not understanding this mode of predicting the future under the appearance of wishing evil, suppose hatred to be returned for hatred, and an evil will for an evil will: since in truth it belongeth to few to distinguish in what way the punishment of the wicked pleaseth the accuser, who longeth to satiate his enmity; and in how widely different a way it pleaseth the judge, who with a righteous mind punishes sins. For the former returneth evil for evil, but the judge when he punishes does not return evil for evil, since he returneth justice to the unjust; and what is just is surely good. He therefore punishes not from delight in another's misery, which is evil for evil, but from love of justice, which is good for evil. Let not then the blind pervert the light of the Scriptures imagining that God doth not punish sins: nor let the wicked flatter themselves, as if he rendered evil for evil. Let us therefore hear the sequel of this divine composition; and in the words of one who seemeth to wish ill, let us recognise the predictions of a prophet; and let us see God making a just retribution, raising our mind up to his eternal laws.—*Augustine*.

Verses 6-19. These terrible curses are repeated with many words and sentences, that we may know that David has not let these words fall rashly or from any precipitate impulse of mind; but, the Holy Spirit having dictated, he employs this form of execration that it may be a perpetual prophecy or prediction of the bitter pains and destruction of the enemies of the Church of God. Nor does David imprecate these punishments so much on his own enemies and Judas the betrayer of Christ; but that similar punishments await all who fight against the kingdom of Christ.—*Mollerus*.

Verses 6-20. I had also this consideration, that if I should now venture all for God, I engaged God to take care of my concerns; but if I forsook him and his ways for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concerns were not so sure, if left at God's feet, while I stood to and for his name, as they would be if they were under my own tuition (or care) though with the denial of the way of God. This was a smarting consideration, and was as spurs unto my flesh. This Scripture (Ps 109:6-20.) also greatly helped it to fasten the more upon me, where Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in all his selfish

thoughts, which moved him to sell his master: pray read it soberly. I had also another consideration, and that was, the dread of the torments of hell, which I was sure they must partake of, that for fear of the cross to shrink from their profession of Christ, his words, and laws, before the sons of men. I thought also of the glory that he had prepared for those that, in faith, and love, and patience, stood to his ways before them. These things, I say, have helped me, when the thoughts of the misery that both myself and mine might for the sake of my profession be exposed to hath lain pinching on my mind.—*John Bunyan*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* As the clamours of a condemned malefactor, not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us."—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* Evidently his prayer in reference to his *trial* for crime; his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. Let it be seen in the result that such a prayer was *wrong*; that it was in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man—a man who *ought* to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer *would* be if offered for a murderer, or violator of the law,—a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that *such* a prayer would be wrong, or would be a "sin"; and so, in his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer *for his own escape* would be "sin." The Psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be *seen* to be in fact a prayer for the protection and escape of a *bad man*. A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the Psalmist prays for.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* Kimchi in his annotations thus explains these words: *i.e.*, "let it be without effect, so that he does not get what he asks for; let him not hit the mark at which he aims": for *ajx* sometimes has the meaning *to miss*.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* St. Jerome says that Judas's prayer was turned into sin, by reason of his want of hope when he prayed: and thus it was that in despair he hanged himself.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* The prayer of the hypocrite is sin formally, and it is sin in the effect, that is, instead of getting any good by it, he gets hurt, and the Lord instead of helping him because he prays, punishes him because of the sinfulness of his prayers. Thus his prayer becomes sin to him, because he receives no more respect from God when he prays than when he sins. And sin doth not only mingle with his prayer (as it doth with the prayers of the holiest), but his prayer is nothing else but a mixture or mingle mangle (as we speak) of many sins.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 7. *Let his prayer become sin.* We should be watchful in prayer lest the most holy worship of God should become an abomination: Isa 1:15 66:3 Jas 4:3 Ho 7:14 Am 5:23. If the remedy be poisoned, how shall the diseased be cured?—*Martin Geier*.

Verses 7-19. These and the following verses, although they contain terrible imprecations, will become less dreadful if we understand them as spoken concerning men pertinaciously cleaving to their vices, against whom only has God threatened punishments; not against those who repent with all their heart, and become thoroughly changed in life.—*John Le Clerc.*

Verse 8. *Let his days be few.* By "*his days*", he meant the days of his apostleship, which were few; since before the passion of our Lord, they were ended by his crime and death. And as if it were asked, What then shall become of that most sacred number twelve, within which our Lord willed, not without a meaning, to limit his twelve first apostles? he at once addeth, *and let another take his office.* As much as to say, let both himself be punished according to his desert, and let his number be filled up. And if any one desire to know how this was done, let him read the Acts of the Apostles.—*Augustine.*

Verse 8. *Let another take his office.* So every man acts, and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by some one, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that "another should take his office", and for this it is *right* to labour and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9. *Let his children be fatherless.* Helpless and shiftless. A sore vexation to many on their death beds, and just enough upon graceless persecutors. But happy are they who, when they lie dying, can say as Luther did, "*Domine Deus gratias ago tibi quod velueris me esse pauperem, et mendicum, & c.* Lord God, I thank thee for my present poverty, but future hopes. I have not an house, lands, possessions, or monies to leave behind me. Thou hast given me wife and children; behold, I return them back to thee, and beseech thee to nourish them, teach them, keep them safe, as hitherto thou hast done, O thou father of the fatherless, and judge of widows."—*John Trapp.*

Verses 9-10, 12-13. "*His children; ""his posterity."* Though in matters of a civil or judicial character, we have it upon the highest authority that the children are not to be made accountable for the fathers, nor the fathers for the children, but every transgressor is to bear the penalty of his own sin; yet, in a moral, and in a social and spiritual sense, it is impossible that the fathers should eat sour grapes, and yet that the children's teeth should not be set on edge. The offspring of the profligate and the prodigal may, and often do, avoid the specific vices of the parent; but rarely, if ever, do they escape the evil consequences of those vices. And this reaction cannot be prevented, until it shall please God first to unmake and then to remodel his whole intelligent creation.—*T. Dale, in a Sermon to Heads of Families, 1839.*

Verses 9-13. Under the Old Covenant, calamity, extending from father to son, was the meed of transgression; prosperity, *vice versa*, of obedience: (see Solomon's prayer, 2Ch 6:23): and these

prayers of the psalmist (cf. Ps 10:13, 12:1 58:10, etc.) may express the wish that God's providential government of his people should be asserted in the chastisement of the enemy of God and man.—*Speaker's Commentary*.

Verse 10. *Let his children be continually vagabonds.* The word used in the sentence pronounced upon Cain, Ge 4:12. Compare Ps 59:11,15.—*William Kay*.

Verse 10. *Let them seek,* etc. Horsley renders this clause, *Let them be driven out from the very ruins of their dwellings,* and remarks that the image is that of "vagabonds seeking a miserable shelter among the ruins of decayed or demolished buildings, and not suffered to remain even in such places undisturbed."

Verses 9-10. When we consider of whom this Psalm is used there will be no difficulty about it. No language could be more awful than that of Ps 109:6-19. It embraces almost every misery we can think of. But could any man be in a more wretched condition than Judas was? Could any words be too severe to express the depth of his misery—of him, who, for three whole years, had been the constant attendant of the Saviour of mankind; who had witnessed his miracles, and had shared his miraculous powers; who had enjoyed all the warnings, all the reproofs of his love, and then had betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver? Can we conceive a condition more miserable than that of Judas? And this Psalm is a *prophecy of the punishment* that should overtake him for his sin. S. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, quotes part of this psalm, and applies it to Judas: he applies it as a prophecy of the punishment he should suffer on the betrayal of the Son of God. It is probable that in this psalm, when it uses the word children, it does not mean those who are his offspring by natural descent, but those *who resemble him, and who partake with him in his wickedness*. This is a common meaning of the word sons, or children, in Holy Scripture. As where our blessed Lord tells the Jews, *Ye are of your father the devil,* he could not mean that the Jews were the natural descendants of the devil, but that they were his children because they did his works. Again, when they are called Abraham's children, it means those who do the works of Abraham. So in this psalm, where it is foretold that fearful punishment should happen to Judas for the betrayal of his Lord, and should be extended to his children, it means *his associates, his companions, and imitators in wickedness*.—*F.H. Dunwell, in "A Tract on the Commination Service," 1853.*

Verses 10, 12-13. It is for public ends that the psalmist prayed that the families of the wicked might be involved in their ruin. These are very terrible petitions; but it is God, not man, who has appointed these calamities as the ordinary consequences of persistence in wickedness. It is God, not man, who visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations. It is because this is the ordinary portion of the transgressors, and *that thus in God's wonted way his abhorrence of the transgressions* of his enemies might be marked, that the psalmist prays for these calamities. He asks God to do what he had declared he would do, and this for public ends, for he says: "I will greatly

praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him *among the multitude*. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul", Ps 109:30-31.—*R.A. Bertram, in "The Imprecatory Psalms," 1867.*

Verses 10-13. Many penurious fathers are so scraping for their children, that they ravish the poor children of God; but the hand of the Lord shall be against their young lions. Na 2:13. They join house to house, and field to field, but their children shall be "*vagabonds and beg*", "*seeking their bread out of their desolate places.*" How many a covetous mole is now digging a house in the earth for his posterity, and never dreams of this sequel, that God should make those children beggars, for whose sake their fathers had made so many beggars! This is a quittance which the sire will not believe, but as sure as God is just the son shall feel. Now if he had but leave to come out of hell for an hour, and see this, how should he curse his folly! Sure, if possible, it would double the pain of his infernal torture. Be moderate, then, ye that so insatiately devour, as if you had an infinite capacity: you overload your stomachs, it is fit they should be disburdened in shameful spewing. How quickly doth a worldly minded man grow a defrauder, from a defrauder to a usurer, from a usurer to an oppressor, from an oppressor to an extortioner! If his eyes do but tell his heart of a booty, his heart will charge his hand, and he must have it, Mic 2:2. They do but see it, like it, and take it. Observe their due payment. *Let the extortioner catch all that he hath:* they got all by extortion, they shall lose all by extortion. They spoiled their neighbours, strangers shall spoil them. How often hath the poor widow and orphan cried, wept, groaned to them for mercy, and found none! They have taught God how to deal with themselves; *let there be none to extend mercy to them.* They have advanced houses for a memorial, and dedicated lands to their own names, Ps 49:11; all to get them a name; and even in this they shall be crossed: *In the next generation their name shall be quite put out.*—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11. *Let the extortioner catch all that he hath.* Note: he is most miserable who falls into the hands of usurers; for they will flay him alive and drain his blood. The Romans, that they might deter the citizens from usury, placed a statue of Marsyas in the Forum or law court, by which they signified that those who came into the hands of usurers would be skinned alive; and to show that usurers, as the most unjust litigants, deserved hanging, they placed a rope in the hand of the figure.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11. *Catch.* This refers to the obligations between creditors and debtors, and he calls these snares, by which, as it were, the insolvent debtors are caught, and at last come to servitude.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 12. *Let there be none to extend mercy to him.* He does not say, None who shall shew, but none who shall "*extend*" kindness to him. The extending of kindness is, when after a friend's death it is shown to his children, and true friendship is of this sort, that the kindness which friends shewed to each other while alive is maintained, not extinguished with the death of the friend.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 12. *Let there be none to extend mercy to him.* Let God in his justice set off all hearts from him that had been so unreasonably merciless. Thus no man opened his mouth to intercede for Haman; Judas was shaken off by the priests, and bid see to himself, etc.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 15. *Let them be before the Lord continually.* The fearful punishment of sinners is, to be always under the eye of an angry God: then the soul of the sinner is dismayed at its own deformity.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15. *Let them be before the Lord continually.* Lafayette, the friend and ally of Washington, was in his youth confined in a French dungeon. In the door of his cell there was cut a small hole, just big enough for a man's eye; at that hole a sentinel was placed, whose duty it was to watch, moment by moment, till he was relieved by a change of guard. All Lafayette saw was the winking eye, but the eye was always there; look when he would, it met his gaze. In his dreams, he was conscious it was staring at him. "Oh", he says, "it was horrible; there was no escape; when he lay down and when he rose up, when he ate and when he read, that eye searched him."—*"New Cyclopaedia of Illustrative Anecdote", 1875.*

Verse 15-19, 29. Strict justice, and nothing more, breathes in every petition. Cannot you say, Amen! to all these petitions? Are you not glad when the wicked man falls into the ditch he has made for another's destruction, and when his mischief returns upon his own head? But you say, "These petitions are unquestionably just, but why did not the psalmist ask, not for justice, but for *mercy*?" The answer is, that in his public capacity, he was bound to think first about justice. No government could stand upon the basis of forgiveness, justice must always go before mercy. Suppose that in the course of the next session Parliament should decree that henceforth, instead of justice being shown to thieves, by sending them to prison, they should be treated charitably, and compelled to restore *one half* of what they stole, what would honest men say about the government? The thieves would doubtless be very complimentary, but what would honest men say? Why, they would say the government had altogether failed of its function, and it would not live to be a week older. And just so, the psalmists were bound first of all to seek for the vindication and establishment of justice and truth. Like the magistrates of today, they considered first the well being of the community. This they had in view in all the calamities they sought to bring upon wrong doers.—*R.A. Bertram.*

Verse 16. *Because.* Why, what is the crime? *Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,* etc. See what a long vial full of the plagues of God is poured out upon the unmerciful man!—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 16. *But persecuted the poor.* If any man will practise subtraction against the poor, God will use it against him, and take his name out of the book of life. If he be damned that gives not his own, what shall become of him that takes away another man's? (*Augustine.*) If judgment without mercy shall be to him that shows no mercy (Jas 2:13) where shall subtraction and rapine appear? *Let the extortioner*

catch all that he hath; and let strangers spoil his labour, Ps 109:11: there is one subtraction, his estate. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out, Ps 109:13: there is another subtraction, his memory. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children, Ps 109:12: there is another subtraction, a denial of all pity to him and his, Let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin, Ps 109:7: there is another subtraction, no audience from heaven. Let another take his office; there is a subtraction of his place: let his days be few, Ps 109:8: there is a subtraction of his life. Let him be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous, Ps 69:28; there is the last, the subtraction of his soul. This is a fearful arithmetic: if the wicked add sins, God will add plagues. If they subtract from others their rights, God shall subtract from them his mercies.—Thomas Adams.

Verse 17. *Cursing* is both good and bad. For we read in the Scriptures that holy men have often cursed. Indeed none can offer the Lord's Prayer rightly without cursing. For when he prays, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done", etc., he must include in the same outpouring of his desires all that is opposed to these, and say, cursed and execrated and dishonoured must all other names be, and all kingdoms which are opposed to thee must be destroyed and rent in pieces, and all devices and purposes formed against thee fall to the ground.—Martin Luther.

Verse 17. *As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.*

He was a wolf in clothing of the lamb,
That stole into the fold of God, and on
The blood of souls, which he did sell to death,
Grew fat; and yet, when any would have turned
Him out, he cried, "Touch not the priest of God."
And that he was anointed, fools believed;
But knew, that day, he was the devil's priest,
Anointed by the hands of Sin and Death,
And set peculiarly apart to ill—
While on him smoked the vials of perdition,
Poured measureless. Ah, me! What cursing then
Was heaped upon his head by ruined souls,
That charged him with their murder, as he stood
With eye, of all the unredeemed, most sad,
Waiting the coming of the Son of Man!

—Robert Pollok.

Verses 17-19. Possibly Ps 109:17-18 describe as fact what Ps 109:19 amplifies in a wish, or prayer.

"He loved cursing, and it loved him in return, and came to him: he delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him. He clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, and, it permeated his inmost parts as water, as the refreshing oil with which the body is anointed finds a way into marrow and bones." The images are familiar; the daily dress, the water that permeates daily every part of the body, the oil used daily for nourishment (Ps 104:15) and gladness (Ps 23:5). In the wish that follows (Ps 109:19), the mantle, or *garment*, which is always worn, and the girdle or belt with which the accursed one is always girded, are substituted, apparently, for more general terms.—*Speakers Commentary*.

Verses 17-19. As the loss of the soul is a loss peculiar to itself, and a loss double, so it is a loss most fearful, because it is attended with the most heavy curse of God. This curse lieth in a deprivation of all good, and in a being swallowed up of all the most fearful miseries that a holy and just and eternal God can righteously inflict, or lay upon the soul of a sinful man. Now let reason here come in and exercise itself in the most exquisite manner; yea, let him now count up all, and all manner of curses and torments that a reasonable and an immortal soul is, or can be made capable of, and able to suffer, and when he has done, he shall come infinitely short of this great anathema, this master curse which God has reserved amongst his treasures, and intends to bring out in that day of battle and war, which he proposes to make upon damned souls in that day. And this God will do, partly as a retaliation, as the former, and partly by way of revenge.

1. By way of retaliation: *As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. Again, "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil it, to his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually." "Let this", saith Christ, "be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord," etc.*

2. As this curse comes by way of retaliation, so it cometh by way of revenge. God will right the wrongs that sinners have done him, will repay vengeance for the despite and reproach wherewith they have affronted him, and will revenge the quarrel of his covenant. As the beginnings of revenges are terrible (De 32:41-42); what, then, will the whole execution be, when he shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ? And, therefore, this curse is executed in wrath, in jealousy, in anger, in fury; yea, the heavens and the earth shall be burned up with the fire of that jealousy in which the great God will come when he cometh to curse the souls of sinners, and when he cometh to defy the ungodly, 2Th 1:7-9.—*John Bunyan*.

Verse 18. The three figures in this verse are climatic: he has clothed himself in cursing, he has drunk it in like water (Job 15:16, 34:7), it has penetrated to the marrow of his bones, like the oily preparations which are rubbed in and penetrate to the bones.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 18. We must not pass this verse without remarking that there is an allusion in its tone to Nu 5:21-22,24 the unfaithful wife. Her curse was to penetrate into her bowels; "the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her"; and such a curse comes on unfaithful Judas, who violates his engagement to the Lord, and upon Israel at large also, who have departed from him "as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband", and have committed adultery against the Bridegroom.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 18-19. Peter, in Ac 1:20, applies this psalm to Christ when the Jews cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"; then did they put on the envenomed garment which has tormented them ever since. It is girded about their loins; the curse has penetrated like water, and entered the very bones like oil. How awful will be the state of those who crucify him afresh, and again put him to open shame.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 21. *For thy name's sake.* My enemies would soon become my friends and my protectors, if I would but renounce my allegiance to thee; my refusal to disobey thee constitutes all my crime in their eyes. My cause, therefore, becomes thine, it will be to thy glory to declare thyself on my side, lest the impious should take occasion from my sufferings to blaspheme thy holy name, as if thou hadst not the power to deliver, or wert utterly indifferent to those who, renouncing all human help, have put their confidence in thee.—*Jean Baptiste Massillon.*

Verse 21. *For thy name's sake.* It does not say, For *my* name, that it may be vindicated from reproach and shame: but for *Thy* name; as if he would say, whatever I may be, O Lord, and whatever may befall me, have respect to Thy name, have regard to it only. I am not worthy, that I should seek Thy help, but Thy name is worthy which thou mayest vindicate from contempt. We learn here with what passion for the glory of the divine name they ought to be animated, who are peculiarly consecrated to the name of God. He does not say, "Because my case is good", but *because thy mercy is good*. Note this also, he does not simply say, Because thou art good, or because thou art merciful; but because thy mercy is good. He had experienced a certain special goodness in the Divine mercy; *i.e.*, such timeliness, kind readiness in all afflictions, and help for every kind of affliction prepared and provided. On this he rests hope and confidence, in this takes refuge. All those are truly happy who have had experience of this mercy, and can depend on it with firm hope and confidence.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 21. Unto a truly broken, humbled sinner, the mercies that are in God, out of which he pardons, should have infinitely more of goodness and sweetness in them than the pardon itself, or all things else that are in the promises. This a soul that hath tasted how good the Lord is will instantly acknowledge. A promise of life to a condemned man is sweet, for life is sweet, as we say; but "thy lovingkindness", said David, who had tasted how good the Lord is, "is better than life", and infinitely sweeter, Ps 63:3. And again says David, *Because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.* Deliverance

was good; yea, but the mercy of God apprehended therewith was infinitely more good to him, which was the greatest inducement to him to seek deliverance. And indeed God's mercy doth eminently bear the style of goodness.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 21-25. The thunder and lightning are now as it were followed by a shower of tears of deep sorrowful complaint.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 22. *For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.* Note here, how beautifully he unites these arguments. He had said, *Because Thy mercy is good*; and he adds, *"Because I am poor and needy."* He could not have added anything more appropriate: for this is the nature of goodness and mercy, even in the human heart, much more in God, the best and most merciful of all beings, that nothing more easily moves it to give succour, than the affliction, calamity, and misery of those by whom it is invoked.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 22. *My heart is wounded within me.* The hearts of the saints and pious men are not as brass or stone, that the apathy of the Stoics should have lodging in them, but are susceptible to griefs and passions.—*Musculus*.

Verse 23. *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.*—Bishop Horsley renders, *"I am just gone, like the shadow stretched to its utmost length"*; and remarks:—"The state of the shadows of terrestrial objects at sunset, lengthening every instant, and growing faint as they lengthen; and in the instant that they shoot to an immeasurable length disappearing."

Verse 23. *I am tossed up and down as the locust.* Although the locusts have sufficient strength of flight to remain on the wing for a considerable period, and to pass over great distances, they have little or no command over the direction of their flight, always travel with the wind, in the same way as the quail. So entirely are they at the mercy of the wind, that if a sudden gust arises the locusts are tossed about in the most helpless manner; and if they should happen to come across one of the circular air currents that are so frequently found in the countries which they inhabit, they are whirled round and round without the least power of extricating themselves.—*J.G. Wood*.

Verse 23. *I am tossed up and down as the locust.* This reference is to the flying locust. I have had frequent opportunities to notice how these squadrons are tossed up and down, and whirled round and round by the ever varying currents of the mountain winds.—*W.M. Thomson*.

Verse 28. *Let them curse, but bless thou.* Fear not thou, who art a saint, their imprecations; this is but like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack, but hurts not; God's blessings will cover thee from their curse.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 28. (*first clause*). Men's curses are impotent, God's blessings are omnipotent.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 30. *I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth.* In the celebration of God's praises, there can be no question that these must issue from the heart ere they can be uttered by the lips; at the same

time, it would be an indication of great coldness, and of want of fervour, did not the tongue unite with the heart in this exercise. The reason why David makes mention of the tongue only is, that he takes it for granted that, unless there be a pouring out of the heart before God, those praises which reach no farther than the ear are vain and frivolous; and, therefore, from the very bottom of his soul, he pours forth his heart felt gratitude in fervent strains of praise; and this he does from the same motives which ought to influence all the faithful—the desire of mutual edification; for to act otherwise would be to rob God of the honour which belongs to him.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.* This expression implies, first, that he appears there as a *friend*. How cheering, how comforting it is to have a friend to stand by us when we are in trouble! Such a friend is Jesus. In the hour of necessity he comes as a friend to stand by the right hand of the poor creature whose soul is condemned by guilt and accusation. But he stands in a far higher relation than that of a friend; he stands, too, as *surety and a deliverer*. He goes, as it were, into the court; and when the prisoner stands at the bar, he comes forward and stands at his right hand as his surety and bondsman; he brings out of his bosom the acquittance of the debt, signed and sealed with his own blood, he produces it to the eyes of the court, and claims and demands the acquittal and absolution of the prisoner at whose right hand he stands. He stands there, then, that the prisoner may be freely pardoned, and completely justified from those accusations that *condemn his soul*. O sweet standing! O blessed appearance!—*Joseph C. Philpot (1802-1869)*.

Verse 31. *He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.* One of the oldest Rabbinical commentaries has a very beautiful gloss on this passage. "Whenever a poor man stands at thy door, the Holy One, blessed be His Name, stands at his right hand. If thou givest him alms, know that thou shalt receive a reward from Him who standeth at his right hand."—*Alfred Edersheim, in "Sketches of the Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ," 1876.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The silence of God. What it may mean: what it involves: how we may endeavour to break it.

Verse 1. *God of my praise.* A text which may be expounded in its double meaning.

Verses 1-3.

1. God is for his people when the wicked are against them (Ps 109:1);

(a) for his people's sake;

(b) for his own sake.

2. The wicked are against his people when he is for them (Ps 109:2-3);

(a) from hatred to God;

(b) from hatred to his people.—*G.R.*

Verse 2. Slander. Its cause—wickedness and malice. Its instruments—deceit and lies. Its

frequency—Jesus and the saints slandered. Its punishment. Our resort when tried by it—prayer to God.

Verse 4. On the excellency of prayer. See Expository Notes.

Verse 4. Our Lord's adversaries, and his resort.

Verses 4-5.

1. David's spirit and conduct towards his enemies.

(a) His spirit is love—love for hatred; hence his denunciations are against their sins, rather than against them.

(b) His conduct. He returned good for evil; he interceded for them.

2. Their spirit and conduct towards him.

(a) Hatred for love.

(b) Evil for good.—*G.R.*

Verse 5. *Evil for good.* This is devil like. Have not men been guilty of this to parents, to those who have warned them, to saints and ministers, and especially to the Lord himself?

Verse 5. How has the Redeemer been recompensed? Show what he deserves and what he receives from various individuals. He feels the unkindness of those who are ungrateful.

Verse 6. It is the law of retribution to punish the wicked by means of the wicked.—*Starke.*

Verse 7. When may prayer become sin. From what is sought, how sought, by whom sought, and wherefore sought.

Verse 8. *Let his days be few.* Sin the great shortener of human life. After the flood the whole race lived a shorter time; passion and avaricious care shorten life, and some sins have a peculiar power to do this, lust, drunkenness, & c.

Verse 20-21.

1. David leaves his enemies in the hand of God (Ps 109:20).

2. He puts himself into the same hands (Ps 109:21).—*G.R.*

Verse 21. The plea of a believer must be drawn from his God, his "name" and "mercy." The opposite habit of searching for arguments in self very common and very disappointing.

Verse 21. The peculiar goodness of divine mercy.

Verse 22. The inward sorrows of a saint. Their cause, effects, consolations and cure.

Verses 26-27.

1. The Prayer.

2. The Believing Title: "O Lord my God."

3. The attribute relied upon.

4. The motive for the petition.

Verse 28. The divine cure for human ill will; and the saint's temper when he trusts therein—"let thy

servant rejoice."

Verse 29.

1. A prayer for the repentance of David's adversaries.
2. A prophecy for their confusion if they remain impenitent.—*G.R.*

Verse 29. The sinner's last mantle.

Verse 30. Vocal praise. Should be personal, resolute, intelligent, abundant, hearty. It should attract others, join with others, stimulate others, but never lose its personality.

Verses 30-31.

1. David's *will* with respect to himself: "I will... yea, I will" etc. (Ps 109:30).
2. His *shall* with respect to God: "he shall", etc. (Ps 109:31).—*G.R.*

Verses 30-31. He promises God that he will praise him, Ps 109:30. He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God, Ps 109:31.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 31.

1. The character to whom the promise is made—the poor.
2. The danger to which he is exposed—those that condemn his soul.
3. The deliverance which is promised to him—divine, opportune, efficient, complete, everlasting.

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND NINTH PSALM

In "The Expositor", vol. 2. (1875), edited by the Rev. Samuel Cox, there is "An Apology for the Vindictive Psalm" (Ps 109:1-31), by Joseph Hammond, L.L.B. In volume 3 of the same magazine are four articles from the pen of the same writer, on "The Vindictive Psalms vindicated." "The Imprecatory Psalms." Six Lectures. By the Rev. R.A. Bertram. 1867. (12 mo.)

In Dr. Thomas Randolph's Works, entitled "A View of our Blessed Saviour's Ministry...together with a Charge, Dissertations, Sermons, and Theological Lectures," 2 vols., 8vo., Oxford, 1784, there is a comment on Ps 109:1-31, vol. 2, p. 315.

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Psalm 110

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Psalm of David. Of the correctness of this title there can be no doubt, since our Lord in Mt 22:1 says, "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord." Yet some critics are so fond of finding new authors for the psalms that they dare to fly in the face of the Lord Jesus himself. To escape from finding Jesus here, they read the title, "Psalm of (or concerning) David, "as though it teas not so much written by him as of him, but he that reads with understanding will see little enough of David here except as the writer. He is not the subject of it even in the smallest degree, but Christ is all. How much was revealed to the patriarch David! How blind are some modern wise men, even amid the present blaze of light, as compared with this poet prophet of the darker dispensation. May the Spirit who spoke by the man after God's own heart give us eyes to see the hidden mysteries of this marvellous Psalm, in which every word has an infinity of meaning.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. The subject is THE PRIEST KING. None of the kings of Israel united these two offices, though some endeavoured to do so. Although David performed some acts which appeared to verge upon the priestly, yet he was no priest, but of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood"; and he was far too devout a man to thrust himself into that office uncalled. The Priest King here spoken of is David's Lord, a mysterious personage typified by Melchizedek, and looked for by the Jews as the Messiah. He is none other than the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. The Psalm describes the appointment of the kingly priest, his followers, his battles, and his victory. Its centre is verse 4, and so it may be divided, as Alexander suggests, into the introduction, verses Ps 106:1-3; the central thought, verse 4; and the supplementary verses, Ps 106:5-7.

EXPOSITION

Verse 2. *The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.* It is in and through the church that for the present the power of the Messiah is known. Jehovah has given to Jesus all authority in the midst of his people, whom he rules with his royal sceptre, and this power goes forth with divine energy from the church for the ingathering of the elect, and the subduing of all evil. We have need to pray for the sending out of the rod of divine strength. It was by his rod that Moses smote the

Egyptians, and wrought wonders for Israel, and even so whenever the Lord Jesus sends forth the rod of his strength, our spiritual enemies are overcome. There may be an allusion here to Aaron's rod which budded and so proved his power; this was laid up in the ark, but our Lord's rod is sent forth to subdue his foes. This promise began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, and it continues even to this day, and shall yet have a grander fulfilment. O God of eternal might, let the strength of our Lord Jesus be more clearly seen, and let the nations see it as coming forth out of the midst of thy feeble people, even from Zion, the place of thine abode. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies as he does whenever his mighty sceptre of grace is stretched forth to renew and save them. Moses' rod brought water out of the flinty rock, and the gospel of Jesus soon causes repentance to flow in rivers from the once hardened heart of man. Or the text may mean that though the church is situated in the midst of a hostile world, yet it exerts a great influence, it continues to manifest an inward majesty, and is after all the ruling power among the nations because the shout of a king is in her midst. Jesus, however hated by men, is still the King of kings. His rule is over even the most unwilling, so as to overrule their fiercest opposition to the advancement of his cause. Jesus, it appears from this text, is not inactive during his session at Jehovah's right hand, but in his own way proves the abiding nature of his kingdom both in Zion and from Zion, both among his friends and his foes. We look for the clearer manifestation of his almighty power in the latter days; but even in these waiting times we rejoice that to the Lord all power is given in heaven and in earth.

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.* In consequence of the sending forth of the rod of strength, namely, the power of the gospel, out of Zion, converts will come forward in great numbers to enlist under the banner of the Priest King. Given to him of old, they are his people, and when his power is revealed, these hasten with cheerfulness to own his sway, appearing at the gospel call as if they were spontaneously, even as the dew comes forth in the morning. This metaphor is further enlarged upon, for as the dew has a sparkling beauty, so these willing armies of converts have a holy excellence and charm about them; and as the dew is the lively emblem of freshness, so are these converts full of vivacity and youthful vigour, and the church is refreshed by them and made to flourish exceedingly. Let but the gospel be preached with divine unction, and the chosen of the Lord respond to it like troops in the day of the mustering of armies; they come arrayed by grace in shining uniforms of holiness, and for number, freshness, beauty, and purity, they are as the dewdrops which come mysteriously from the tooming's womb. Some refer this passage to the resurrection, but even if it be so, the work of grace in regeneration is equally well described by it, for it is a spiritual resurrection. Even as the holy dead rise gladly into the lovely image of their Lord, so do quickened souls put on the glorious righteousness of Christ, and stand forth to behold their Lord and serve him. How truly beautiful is holiness! God himself admires it. How wonderful also is the eternal youth of the mystical

body of Christ! As the dew is new every morning, so is there a constant succession of converts to give to the church perpetual juvenility. Her young men have a dew from the Lord upon them, and arouse in her armies an undying enthusiasm for him whose "locks are bushy and black as a raven" with unfailing youth. Since Jesus ever lives, so shall his church ever flourish. As his strength never faileth, so shall the vigour of his true people be renewed day by day. As he is a Priest King, so are his people all priests and kings, and the beauties of holiness are their priestly dress, their garments for glory and for beauty; of these priests unto God there shall be an unbroken succession. The realization of this day of power during the time of the Lord's tarrying is that which we should constantly pray for; and we may legitimately expect it since he ever sits in the seat of honour and power, and puts forth his strength, according to his own word, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Verse 4. We have now reached the heart of the psalm, which is also the very centre and soul of our faith. Our Lord Jesus is a Priest King by the ancient oath of Jehovah: "he glorified not himself to be made an high priest, "but was ordained there unto from of old, and was called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek. It must be a solemn and a sure matter which leads the Eternal to swear, and with him an oath fixes and settles the decree for ever; but in this case, as if to make assurance a thousand times sure, it is added, " and will not repent." It is done, and done for ever and ever; Jesus is sworn in to be the priest of his people, and he must abide so even to the end, because his commission is sealed by the unchanging oath of the immutable Jehovah. If his priesthood could be revoked, and his authority removed, it would be the end of all hope and life for the people whom he loves; but this sure rock is the basis of our security—the oath of God establishes our glorious Lord both in his priesthood and in his throne. It is the Lord who has constituted him a priest for ever, he has done it by oath, that oath is without repentance, is taking effect now, and will stand throughout all ages: hence our security in him is placed beyond all question.

The declaration runs in the present tense as being the only time with the Lord, and comprehending all other times. "Thou art, "i.e., thou wast and art and art to come, in all ages a priestly King. The order of Melchizedek's priesthood was the most ancient and primitive, the most free from ritual and ceremony, the most natural and simple, and at the same time the most honourable. That ancient patriarch was the father of his people, and at the same time ruled and taught them; he swayed both the sceptre and the censer, reigned in righteousness, and offered sacrifice before the Lord. There has never arisen another like to him since his days, for whenever the kings of Judah attempted to seize the sacerdotal office they were driven back to their confusion: God would have no king priest save his son. Melchizedek's office was exceptional none preceded or succeeded him; he comes upon the page of history mysteriously; no pedigree is given, no date of birth, or mention of death; he blesses Abraham, receives tithe and vanishes from the scene amid honours which show that he was

greater than the founder of the chosen nation. He is seen but once, and that once suffices. Aaron and his seed came and went; their imperfect sacrifice continued for many generations, because it had no finality in it, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect. Our Lord Jesus, like Melchizedek, stands forth before us as a priest of divine ordaining; not made a priest by fleshly birth, as the sons of Aaron: he mentions neither father, mother, nor descent, as his right to the sacred office; he stands upon his personal merits, by himself alone; as no man came before him in his work, so none can follow after; his order begins and ends in his own person, and in himself it is eternal, "having neither beginning of days nor end of years The King Priest has been here and left his blessing upon the believing, and now he sits in glory in his complete character, stoning for us by the merit of his blood, and exercising all power on our behalf."

"O may we ever hear thy voice
In mercy to us speak,
And in our Priest we will rejoice,
Thou great Melchizedek."

The last verses of this psalm we understand to refer to the future victories of the Priest King. He shall not forever sit in waiting posture, but shall come into the fight to end the weary war by his own victorious presence. He will lead the final charge in person; his own right hand and his holy arm shall get unto him the victory.

Verse 5. *The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.* Now that he has come into the field of action, the infinite Jehovah comes with him as the strength of his right hand. Eternal power attends the coming of the Lord, and earthly power dies before it as though smitten through with a sword. In the last days all the kingdoms of the earth shall be overcome by the kingdom of heaven, and those who dare oppose shall meet with swift and overwhelming ruin. What are kings when they dare oppose the Son of God? A single stroke shall suffice for their destruction. When the angel of the Lord smote Herod there was no need of a second blow; he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. Concerning the last days, we read of the Faithful and True, who shall ride upon a white horse, and in righteousness judge and make war: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Verse 6. *He shall judge among the heathen, or, among the nations.* All nations shall feel his power, and either yield to it joyfully or be crushed before it. He shall fill the places with the dead bodies. In the terrible battles of his gospel all opponents shall fall till the field of fight is heaped high with the slain. This need not be understood literally, but as a poetical description of the overthrow of all rebellious powers and the defeat of all unholy principles. Yet should kings oppose the Lord with weapons of war, the result would be their overwhelming defeat and the entire destruction of their

forces. Read in connection with this prophecy the passage which begins at the seventeenth verse of Re 19:1 and runs on to the end of the chapter. Terrible things in righteousness will be seen ere the history of this world comes to an end. He shall wound the heads over many countries. He will strike at the greatest powers which resist him, and wound not merely common men, but those who rule and reign. If the nations will not have Christ for their Head, they shall find their political heads to be powerless to protect them. Or the passage may be read, "he has smitten the head over the wide earth." The monarch of the greatest nation shall not be able to escape the sword of the Lord; nor shall that dread spiritual prince who rules over the children of disobedience be able to escape without a deadly wound. Pope and priest must fall, with Mahomet and other deceivers who are now heads of the people. Jesus must reign and they must perish.

Verse 7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way.* So swiftly shall he march to conquest that he shall not stay for refreshment, but drink as he hastens on. Like Gideon's men that lapped, he shall throw his heart into the fray and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make in the earth. "Therefore shall he lift up the head." His own head shall be lifted high in victory, and his people, in him, shall be upraised also. When he passed this way before, he was burdened and had stern work laid upon him; but in his second advent he will win an easy victory; aforetime he was the man of sorrows, but when he comes a second time his head will be lifted in triumph. Let his saints rejoice with him. "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." In the latter days we look for terrible conflicts and for a final victory. Long has Jesus borne with our rebellious race, but at length he will rise to end the warfare of long suffering, by the blows of justice. God has fought with men's sins for their good, but he will not always by his Spirit strive with men; he will cease from that struggle of long suffering love, and begin another which shall soon end in the final destruction of his adversaries. O King priest, we who are, in a minor degree, king priests too, are full of gladness because thou reignest even now, and wilt come ere long to vindicate thy cause and establish thine empire for ever. Even so, come quickly. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The preceding Psalm is a Passion Psalm, and it is now followed by a Psalm of Christ's Resurrection, Ascension, and Session in glory. We have seen the same connection in Ps. 22-24, and in Ps. 45-47. The present psalm grows up from the former Psalm, as the Hill of Olivet, the Hill of Ascension, rises up from the Vale of Gethsemane below it. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm. This psalm has been well designated the crown of all the Psalms, of which Luther saith that it is worthy to be overlaid with precious jewels. More especially does the Reformer call verse 5 a well spring,—nay, a treasury of all Christian doctrines, understanding, wisdom, and comfort, richer and fuller than any other passage of Holy Writ. In his own peculiar manner, he styles

Christ the Sheblimini ('Sit on my right hand'). 'Full sure, the devil must let alone my Sheblimini, and cannot bring him down either by his scorn or by his wrath.' Christ still liveth and reigneth, and his title is Sheblimini. On his stirrup is engraven, "I will make thine enemies' thy footstool, "and upon his diadem, "Thou art a priest for ever."—*Alfred Edersheim*, 1873.

Whole Psalm. The ancients (by Cassiodorus' collection) term this psalm the sun of our faith, the treasure of holy writ: "verbis brevis, sensu infinitus", (saith Augustine,) short in words, but in sense infinite. Theodoret notes how it is connected with the psalm going before: "there (saith he) we have his cross and sufferings, here his conquest and trophies." For he cometh forth as the heir apparent of the Almighty, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, graced with,

1. Title, "My Lord."
2. Place, "Sit thou on my right hand."
3. Power, "Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

—*John Prideaux*, in a Sermon entitled, "*The Draught of the Brooke*," 1636.

Whole Psalm. This psalm is one of the fullest and most compendious prophecies of the person and offices of Christ in the whole Old Testament, and so full of fundamental truth, that I shall not shun to call it Symbolum Davidicum, the prophet David's creed. And indeed there are very few, if any, of the articles of that creed which we all generally profess, which are not either plainly expressed, or by most evident implication couched in this little model. First, the Doctrine of the Trinity is in the first words; "The Lord said unto my Lord." There is Jehovah the Father, and my Lord, the Son, and the consecrating of him to be David's Lord which was by the Holy Ghost, by whose fulness he was anointed unto the offices of king and priest; for so our Saviour himself expounds this word "said," by the scaling and sanctification of him to his office, Joh 10:34,35,36. Then we have the Incarnation of Christ, in the words, "my Lord," together with his dignity and honour above David (as our Saviour himself expounds it, Mt 22:42,45). Mine, that is, my Son by descent and genealogy after the flesh, and yet my Lord too, in regard of his higher son ship. We have also the Sufferings of Christ, in that he was consecrated a priest (Ps 110:4) to offer up himself once for all, and so to drink of the brook in the way. We have his Completed Work and conquest over all his enemies and sufferings; his Resurrection, "he shalt lift up his head"; his Ascension and Intercession, "Sit thou on my right hand." We have here also a Holy Catholic Church gathered together by the sceptre of his kingdom, and holding in the parts thereof a blessed and beautiful Communion of Saints; "The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.". We have the Last Judgment, for all his enemies must be put under his feet, (which is the Apostle's argument to prove the end of all things, 1Co 15:25); and there is the day of his wrath, wherein he shall accomplish that judgment over the heathen, and that victory over the kings of the

earth (who take counsel and band themselves together against him), which he doth here in his word begin. We have the Remission of sins, comprised in his priesthood, for he was to offer sacrifices for the remission of sins, and "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Eph 1:7 Heb 9:26. We have the Resurrection of the body, because he must "subdue all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death," as the Apostle argues out of this psalm, 1Co 15:25,26. And lastly, we have life everlasting, in the everlasting merit and virtue of his priesthood, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," and in his sitting at the right hand of God, whither he is gone as our forerunner, and to prepare a place for us, Heb 6:20 Joh 14:2; and therefore the apostle from his sitting there, and living ever, infers the perfection and certainty of our salvation, Ro 6:8,11 8:17 Eph 2:16 Col 3:1-4 1Co 15:49; Php 3:20,21 1Th 4:14 Heb 7:25 1Jo 3:2. *Edward Reynolds*, 1599-1676.

Whole Psalm. Although the Jews of later times have gone about to wrest it to another meaning, yet this Psalm is so approved and undoubted a prophecy of Christ, that the Pharisees durst not deny it, when being questioned by our Saviour (Mt 22:42,43) how it should be, seeing Christ is the son of David, that David not with standing should call him Lord, saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord," they could not answer him a word, whereas the answer had been very easy and ready if they could have denied this psalm to be meant of Christ. But they knew it could not be otherwise understood, and it was commonly taken amongst them to be a prophecy of their Messias, according to the very evidence of the text itself, which cannot be fitted to any other, but only to Christ our Saviour, the Son of God. For whereas some of them since then have construed all these things as spoken in the name of the people of Judah concerning David their king, the text itself refuseth that construction, when in those words, "Sit thou at my right hand," it mentions an honour done to him of whom it speaketh, greater than can be fitted to the angels, and therefore much less to be applied unto David. Again, that which is spoken in the fourth verse of the priesthood, cannot be understood of David, who was indeed a king, but never had anything spoken as touching the priesthood to appertain unto him, and of whom it cannot be conceived how it should be said, "Thou art a priest for ever," etc. Yea, there is nothing here spoken whereof we may see in David any more but some little shadow in comparison of that which hath come to pass in Jesus Christ. *Robert Abbot* (1560-1617) in "*The Exaltation of the Kingdom and Priesthood of Christ.*"

Whole Psalm. The sixty-eighth psalm hails the ascent of the Messiah, prefigured by the translation of the ark, and gives a rapid and obscure view of the glories and the blessings consequent upon that event. The twenty-fourth exhibits to us the Messiah ascending to his redemption throne borne up by the wings of angels and archangels, and hosannahed by the whole intelligent creation; it marks in the most glowing colours the triumphant entry of Messiah into the heavenly regions, and the tone of authority and power with which he commands that entrance—it sends him attended by the angelic host to his Father's throne, there to claim that preeminence which was his by inheritance and by

conquest. At this point the Psalm before us "takes up the wondrous tale"; it exhibits to us the awful solemnities of his reception, it represents the Father bestowing on his well beloved Son the kingdom which he had earned, exalting him to the throne, and putting all things under his feet; receiving him in his office of prophet, and promising universality and permanence to "the rod of his strength"; receiving him in the office of priesthood, his own peculiar priesthood, and confirming its efficacy and duration by an oath; thus perfecting the redemption scheme, and completing the conquest over sin and death, and him who had the power of death. Man united with God was raised to the throne of being: man united with God perfected the sacrifice which was demanded, and the angelic host is represented by the Psalmist as taking up the strain, and hymning the future triumphs of the King of Glory—triumphs over his foes, whom he will visit in the day of his wrath, and triumphs with his willing people, whom he will assist with his Spirit, refine by his grace, and exalt into his glory. Such do I conceive to be the occasion, the object, and the tendency of this sacred song: to me it appears to be eminently an epinicion, or song of victory: it celebrates the triumph of the conqueror, it presents him with the rewards of victory, and it predicts future conquests as crowning his glory; while elsewhere we see the Captain of our salvation militant, here we see him triumphant; while elsewhere we see his offices inchoate, here they are perfected by the approval of the Godhead, and the promise of eternity: here we have instruction consolidating empire, and the atonement completed by the everlasting priesthood. *J.H. Singer, in "The Irish Pulpit," 1839.*

Verse 1. In this one verse we have a description of Christ's person, his wars and his victory; so that we may say of it, (and so indeed of the whole psalm, which is an epitome of the Gospel), as Tully did of Brutus in his laconical epistle, "Quam multa, quam paucis!" How much in a little. *John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand.* An oft quoted passage—because it contains a memorable truth. We find it quoted by Messiah himself to lead Israel to own him as greater than David, Mt 22:44. It is quoted in Heb 1:13, to prove him higher far than angels. It is brought forward by Peter, Ac 2:34, to show him Lord as well as Christ. It is referred to in Heb 10:12,13, as declaring that Jesus has satisfactorily finished what he undertook to accomplish on earth "the one sacrifice for ever", and is henceforth on that seat of divine honour "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" in the day of his Second Coming. *Andrew A. Behar.*

Verse 1. *The Lord said.* Albeit the understanding of Christ's person and office be necessary unto the church, yet none know the Son save the Father, and they to whom he will reveal him: for David knew Christ only by the Father's teaching: "The Lord said", said he. *David Dickson.*

Verse 1. *My Lord.* From hence we learn that though Christ was man, yet he was more than a bare man, since he is Lord to his father David. For *jure naturae*, no son is lord to his father; domination doth never ascend. There must be something above nature in him to make him his father's sovereign, as our Saviour himself argues from these words, Mt 22:42,45. *Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1. My Lord. It was a higher honour to have Christ for his son, than to be a king; yet David does not say that Christ is his son, but rejoices that Christ is his Lord, and he Christ's servant. But this joy has also been procured for it: see Lu 1:43; Joh 20:28 Php 3:3,8. They who regard the Messiah only as the son of David, regard the lesser part of the conception of him. A dominion to which David himself is subject, shows the heavenly majesty of the King, and the heavenly character of his kingdom. *John Albert Bengel.*

Verse 1. Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Every word is full of weight. For though ordinarily subdivisions of holy Scripture and crumbling of the bread of life be rather a loosing than an expounding of it; yet in such parts of it as were of purpose intended for models and summaries of fundamental doctrines, (of which sort this psalm is one of the fullest and briefest in the whole Scriptures), as in little maps of large countries, there is no word whereupon some point of weighty consequence may not depend. Here then is to be considered the term of duration or measure of Christ's kingdom: "until." The author of subduing Christ's enemies under him: "I, the Lord." The manner thereof; *ponam* and *ponam scabellum* put thy foes as a stool under thy feet. Victory is a relative word, and presupposes enemies, and they are expressed in the text... Enmity shows itself against Christ in all the offices of his mediation. There is enmity against him as a prophet. Enmity against his truth,—in opinion by adulterating it with human mixtures and superinducement, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men; in affection, by wishing many divine truths were razed out of the Scriptures, as being manifestly contrary to those pleasures which they love rather than God; in conversation, by keeping down the truth in unrighteousness, and in those things which they know, as brute beasts, corrupting themselves. Enmity against his teaching, by quenching the motions, and resisting the evidence of his Spirit in the Word, refusing to hear his voice, and rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. There is enmity against him as a priest, by undervaluing his person, sufferings, righteousness, or merits. And as a king; enmity to his worship, by profaneness neglecting it, by idolatry misappropriating it, by superstition corrupting it. Enmity to his ways and service, by ungrounded prejudices, misjudging them as grievous, unprofitable, or unequal ways; and by wilful disobedience forsaking them to walk in the ways of our own heart. *Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1. Make thine enemies thy footstool! This expression, that the conquest of Christ's enemies shall be but as the removing of a stool into its place, notes unto us two things: first, the easiness of God's victory over the enemies of Christ. They are before him as nothing, less than nothing, the drop of a bucket, the dust of the balance, a very little thing...Secondly, as this putting of Christ's enemies like a stool under the feet notes easiness, so also it notes order or beauty too. When Christ's enemies shall be under his foot, then there shall be a right order in things; then it shall indeed appear that God is a God of order, and therefore the day wherein that shall be done, is called "the times of the restitution of all things," Ac 3:21. The putting of Christ's enemies under his feet is an act of justice;

and of all others, justice is the most orderly virtue, that which keepeth beauty upon the face of a people, as consisting itself in symmetry and proportion. This putting of Christ's enemies as a stool under his feet, also denotes unto us two things in reference to Christ: first, his rest, and secondly, his triumph. To stand, in the Scripture phrase, denotes ministry, and to sit, rest; and there is no posture so easy as to sit with a stool under one's feet. Till Christ's enemies then be all under his feet, he is not fully in his rest. Furthermore, this "footstool" under Christ's feet, in reference to his enemies, denotes unto us four things. First, the extreme shame and confusion which they shall everlastingly suffer, the utter abasing and bringing down of all that exalteth itself against Christ. Secondly, hereby is noted the burden which wicked men must bear: the footstool beareth the weight of the body, so must the enemies of Christ bear the weight of his heavy and everlasting wrath upon their souls. Thirdly, herein is noted the relation which the just recompense of God bears unto the sins of ungodly men. Thus will Christ deal with his enemies at the last day. Here they trample upon Christ in his word, in his ways, in his members; they make the saints bow down for them to go over, and make them as the pavements on the ground; they tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and the sanctuary of the Lord, and put Christ to shame; but there their own measure shall be returned into their bosoms, they shall be constrained to confess as Adonibezek, "As I have done, so God hath requited me." Lastly, herein we may note the great power and wisdom of Christ in turning the malice and mischief of his enemies unto his own use and advantage; and so ordering wicked men that though they intend nothing but extirpation and ruin to his kingdom, yet they shall be useful unto him, and, against their own wills, serviceable to those glorious ends, in the accomplishing whereof he shall be admired by all those that believe. As in a great house there is necessary use of vessels of dishonour, destined unto sordid and mean, but yet daily, services: so in the great house of God, wicked men are his utensils and household instruments, as footstools and staves, and vessels wherein there is no pleasure, though of them there may be good use. *Condensed from Reynolds.*

Verse 1. *Thy foot stool.* As this our king has a glorious throne, so has he also a wonderful footstool; and as his royal throne imparts to us comfort in the highest degree, so his footstool also imparts to us joy. How joyful shall his poor subjects be when they hear that their prince and king has slain their enemies and delivered them out of their hands! How did their poor subjects go forward to meet Saul and Jonathan when those kings had slain the Philistines! ...Moreover, because our King has his enemies under his feet, thus shall he also bring all our enemies under our feet, for his victory is ours, God be thanked, who has given us the victory through Christ our Lord. *Joshua Arnd, 1626-1685.*

Verse 2. *The rod of thy strength,* or rather, "The sceptre of thy might", i.e., of "Thy kingly majesty", as in Jer 48:17; Eze 19:14. Chrysostom plays upon the word *rabdov* (LXX) as a rod of strength and consolation, as in Ps 23:4; a rod of chastisement, as in Ps 2:9, *1Co* 4:21; a symbol of kingly rule, as in Isa 11:1, Ps 45:6. It was by this rod, he says, that the disciples wrought when they subdued the

world, in obedience to the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations"; a rod far more powerful than that of Moses, "for that divided rivers, this brake in pieces the ungodliness of the world." And then with profound truth he adds, "Nor would one err who should call the Cross the rod of power; for this rod converted sea and land, and filled them with a vast power. Armed with this rod, the Apostles went forth throughout the world, and accomplished all that they did, beginning at Jerusalem." The Cross, which to men seemed the very emblem of shame and weakness, was, in truth, the power of God. *J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2. *The rod of thy strength.* The power of this sceptre and word of Christ appeareth greatly in the saving of his elect... So mightily hath it prevailed and overruled the minds of men against nature, and reason, and learning, and wisdom, and custom, and whatsoever else is strong to hold men in the liking of those things which they have once received and followed, as that they have been content to renounce the devotions which their forefathers had so long embraced; to cast away the gods which themselves had devoutly served; to stop their ears against the contrary motives and persuasions of father and mother; to harden their hearts against the kneeling and weeping and embracing of wife and children; to forego their honours, and inheritances, yea, and their lives also, rather than lose that peace and joy of heart which the same word of Christ had ministered unto them. Yea, how strange is it, and how greatly doth it commend the power of this word, to see weakness hereby prevailing against strength, simplicity against policy; to see the lamb standing without fear before the lion, the gentle turtle before the devouring kite; women and children and weaklings before the great monarchs and potentates of the world, not fearing their threatening words, nor dreading their tormenting hands, but boldly uttering the word of their testimony (Re 12:11), in despite of all their fury, and never yielding to shrink from it, by anything that could be devised against them. The word of God in their hearts gave them courage and resolution and strength to go through fire and water, to bear all adventures of wind and weather, and howsoever they seemed to be beaten against the rocks, yet they escaped shipwreck, and arrived safe at the haven of their desire. *Robert Abbot.*

Verse 2. *Out of Zion.* We need not say much about how the omniscience of God is displayed in the wonderful fact, that in the very land of the covenant—in the very midst of that people who rejected and crucified the Saviour, the first church of Christ on earth was established. What would cavillers and blasphemers have said, had it been otherwise? had the Christian community been formed in any of the heathen countries? Would it not have been considered as a fiction of the idolatrous priests? Israel scattered among the nations, and the Church of Christ having begun in Zion at Jerusalem, are the most wonderful and enduring monuments, and incontestable witnesses of the truth of Christianity. *Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 2. From his ruling in the midst of enemies we learn that the kingdom of Christ in this life is the kingdom of the Cross, of persecutions, and of dangers. Enemies are never wanting, not only external

adversaries, but also spiritual and eternal; and therefore great sorrow is always awaiting the godly. In this most terrible conflict, however, their minds are lifted up by this consolation, viz., that the rod of the kingdom is strong, and cannot be overcome by any force or power; yea, more, albeit assailed with contendings and all kinds of storms, it will continue stable, firm, and perpetual: and there will always be a Church among men, which will fear and worship this King; because the experience of all the ages teaches, that this kingdom has the more grown and increased the more it has been opposed, according to that saying of Basil, *en taiv yliquesi mallon yallei h ekkhhsia*, the Church flourishes more by tribulation. *Rivetus*.

Verse 2. *Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.* Set up thy power over them and reign in them. This is a commission to set up a kingdom in the very midst of those who were his enemies; in the hearts of those who had been and were rebellious. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by subduing them, so that they become his willing servants. They yield to him, and he rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but one much more difficult of execution,—to make them his friends, and to dispose them to submit to his authority. Mere power may crush men; It requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey. *Albert Barnes*.

Verse 3. *Thy people.* That is, those whom thou dost receive from thy Father, and, by setting up the standard and ensign of the Gospel, gather to thyself. "Shall be willing." The word is willingness, that is, a people of great willingness and devotion, or (as the original word is elsewhere used, Ps 119:108), shall be freewill offerings unto thee. The abstract being put for the concrete, and the plural for the singular, notes how exceeding forward and free they should be; as the Lord, to signify that his people were most rebellious, saith, that they were rebellion itself, Eze 2:8. So then the meaning is, thy people shall, with most ready and forward cheerfulness, devote, consecrate, and render up themselves to thy government as a reasonable sacrifice, shall be of a most liberal, free, noble, and unconstrained spirit in thy service, and shall be voluntaries in the wars of thy kingdom. *Edward Reynolds*.

Verse 3. *Thy people,* O Jesus Christ, which were given thee by the Father, purchased and redeemed by thee, who acknowledged thee for their Lord, and are bound to thee by a military oath, are extremely willing, being devoted to thy service with the greatest readiness of soul, alacrity, inclination, and voluntary obedience. Nor are they willing only, but willingness itself in the abstract; nay, willingness in the plural number, the highest and most excellent willingness, all which add an emphasis. This is seen to be so Plyh Mwyb "in the day of thy *valour* power, "in which thy generous spirit laying hold of them, animates them to grand and bold enterprises. Then they go forth in the beauties of holiness, by which they are a terror to the devil, a delight to God and angels, and a mutual edification to one another. *Herman Witsius*, 1636-1708.

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing.* Willing to do what? They shall be willing while others are

unwilling. The simple term "willing," is very expressive. It denotes the beautiful condition of creatures who suffer themselves to be wrought upon, and moved, according to the will of God. They suffer God to work in them to will and to do. They are willing to die unto all sin, they are willing to crucify the old man, or self, in order that the new man, or Christ, may be formed in them. They are willing to be weaned from their own thoughts and purposes, that the thoughts and purposes of God may be fulfilled in them. They are willing to be transferred from nature's steps of human descent to God's steps of human ascent. Or, to abide by the simplicity of our text, God is Will, and they are "willing." God will beautify them with salvation, because there is nothing in them to hinder his working. They will be wise, they will be good, they will be lovely, they will be like God, for they are "willing"; and there proceeds from God a mighty spirit, the whole tendency of which is to make his creatures like himself. *John Pulsford, in "Quiet Hours," 1857.*

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing.* They are willing in believing, loving, obeying, adhering, living piously and justly in this world; so that they do not need the constraints of laws or threats, because they are led by the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, also, is liberty. *Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing.* Am I one of the "willing people"—not only my obedience and allegiance secured from a conviction of the truth, but my heart inclined, and my will renewed? To do the will of God, to bear the will of God, to coincide with the will of God—and that with calm if not cheerful consent of the heart, as seeing him who is invisible, and holding fast my living apprehensions of his person and character? All unwillingness, whether practical or lurking in the heart, springs from unbelief—from a failure to realise him or his purposes. Were Jesus, as God become incarnate, and as giving himself for me, and his counsel of grace towards me, ever or even in any measure before my heart, how could I hesitate to yield myself, absolutely and implicitly, to him and his guidance? Again, this "willingness" is the essence of holiness; it constitutes "the beauties of holiness"—the beauty of Christ cast over the soul. The cure, therefore, for all my misery and sin is more faith, more of Christ, and nearer to him. This let me seek and ask with ever increasing earnestness. *Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,* etc. The prophet here notes three things respecting the subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah:

1. Their prompt obedience.
2. Their attire or vesture.
3. Their abundance, or multitude.

This representation admirably agrees with what precedes. He had said that the Messiah should reign in the midst of his enemies, but lest any one should think that he would reign only over enemies, unwilling and opposing, as the devils are made subject to Christ, now he lets us know that he will

have a loyal people, and obedient subjects, for else there would be wanting that same glory of which Solomon speaks in Pr 14:28, "In the multitude of people is the king's honour." He affirms also, that he would have his own people, who would recognise, receive, and serve him as King, with true obedience, nor would it be a small company, but like the dew, which waters the face of the whole earth. *Rivetus*.

Verse 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* It is power acted and executed with all sweetness, mildness, and gentleness. Here is "leading, but no force; conduct, but no compulsion, "vehemence, inclination, non coactio: {1} the will is determined, but not the least violence is done to it, to the infringing of its liberty. How spontaneously does the person led follow him that leads him! So it is here. This and all other workings of the Spirit are admirably suited to the nature of reasonable and free agents. Efficacious grace does not at all destroy natural liberty. Where the spirit does not find sinners willing, by his sweet method he makes them willing: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." A "day of power, "yet "willing" Even the Spirit's drawing is managed with all consistency to the freedom of the will; elknei o yeost, alla bonlomenon elknei {2}. He draws; "but it is one that he makes willing to follow." "Behold, I will allure her" (Ho 2:14): aye, there is the Spirit's leading! this being the constant and avowed doctrine of the Protestants, and particularly their explication of the Spirit's leading in the text *Ro 8:14*; how injurious and invidious are the Popish writers in their traducing and calumniating of them, as if they asserted the Spirit, in this or any other act, to work with compulsion, or in a way destructive to man's essential liberty! It is a vile scandal!

{1} Gorranus

{2} Chrysostom

—*Thomas Jacomb*, in "*The Morning Exercises*."

Verse 3. *In the day of thy power.* In the day of thy strength, saith the Vulgate: of thy force and valour, say Tremellius and Junius: of the assemblies, say they of Geneva: of the armies, saith Munster; "at such times as thou shalt bring thy bands and join battle, "so Vatablus, Castalio, and the Chaldee Paraphrase have it. All which the original Plyh mryp may bear without straining. *John Prideaux*, 1578-1650.

Verse 3. The subjects of the Priest King are willing soldiers. In accordance with the warlike tone of the whole Psalm, our text describes the subjects as an army. That military metaphor comes out more closely when we attach the true meaning of the words, "in the day of thy power." The word rendered, and rightly rendered, "power, "has the same ambiguity which that word has in the English of the date of our translation, and for a century later, as you may find in Shakespeare and Milton, who both used it in the sense of "army". Singularly enough we do not employ "powers" in that meaning, but we do another word which means the same thing—and talk of "forces", meaning thereby "troops" ..."The day of thy power" is not a mere synonym for "the time of thy might", but means specifically "the day of

thine army", that is, "the day when thou dost muster thy forces and set them in array for the war". The King is going forth to conquest. But he goes not alone. Behind him come his faithful followers, all pressing on with willing hearts and high courage. *Alexander McLaren, 1871.*

Verse 3. *In the day of thy power.* This refers in a general way to the gospel dispensation, and in particular to the period of conversion. To the perishing sinner the gospel comes, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It is an arresting power; it meets the sinner, and stays his mad career, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. It is a convincing power, it teaches the sinner that he is ruined in every respect, and leads him to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" ... It is a life giving power; it quickens dead souls, and will eventually bring the dead bodies from their graves; "all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall live." This is the style of Jehovah, "it will, they shall"; none other dare speak thus. It is also liberating power; "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—*Theophilus Jones, in a Sermon preached at Surrey Chapel, 1823.*

Verse 3. *Thy people, etc.* In homage, they shall be like a company of priests in sacred vestments, for they shall appear "in the beauties of holiness". In number, they shall be like the countless dewdrops "from the womb of the morning", sparkling in the rays of the rising sun, and reflecting his radiance. In glory they shall bear the likeness of Christ's resurrection in all its vernal freshness: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth". *Benjamin Wildon Cart.*

Verse 3. *In the beauties of holiness.* In holy vestments as priests. They are at once warriors and priests; meet for the service of Him who was King and Priest. Neander (Mem. of Chr. Life, ch. 4) remarks on the connection between these two sides of the Christian character. God's soldiers can only maintain their war by priestly self-consecration. Conversely: God's priests can only preserve their purity by unintermitted conflict. *William Kay.*

Verse 3. *In the beauties of holiness.* This expression is usually read as if it belonged either to the words immediately preceding, or to those immediately following. But in either case the connection is somewhat difficult and obscure. It seems better regarded as a distinct and separate clause, adding a fresh trait to the description of the army. And what that is we need not find any difficulty in ascertaining. "The beauties of holiness" is a frequent phrase for the sacerdotal garments, the holy festal attire of the priests of the Lord. So considered, how beautifully it comes in here. The conquering King whom the psalm hymns is a Priest for ever; and he is followed by an army of priests. The soldiers are gathered in the day of the muster, with high courage and willing devotion, ready to fling away their lives; but they are clad not in mail, but in priestly robes; like those who wait before the altar rather than like those who plunge into the fight, like those who compassed Jericho with the ark for their standard and the trumpets for all their weapons. We can scarcely fail to remember the words which echo these and interpret them. "The armies which were in heaven followed him on white

horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean"—a strange armour against sword cut and spear thrust. *Alexander McLaren.*

Verse 3. *The beauties of holiness.* Godliness is our spiritual beauty. Godliness is to the soul as the light to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness that sets us off in God's eye, but goodness: what is the beauty of the angels but their sanctity? Godliness is the curious embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Ghost: a soul furnished with godliness is damasked with beauty, and enamelled with purity: this is the "clothing of wrought gold" which makes the King of heaven fall in love with us. Were there not an excellency in holiness, the hypocrite would never go about to paint it. Godliness sheds a glory and lustre upon the saints: what are the graces but the golden feathers in which Christ's dove shines? Ps 68:13. *Thomas Watson.*

Verse 3. *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.* These words are often misunderstood, and taken to be a description of the fresh, youthful energy attributed by the Psalm to the Priest King of this nation of soldier priests. The misunderstanding, I suppose, has led to the common phrase, "the dew of one's youth". But the reference of the expression is to the army, not to its leader. "Youth" here is a collective noun, equivalent to "young men". The host of his soldier subjects is described as a band of young warriors, whom he leads, in their fresh strength and countless numbers and gleaming beauty like the dew of the morning... It is as a symbol of the refreshing which a weary world will receive from the conquests and presence of the King and his host, that they are likened to the glittering morning dew. Another prophetic Scripture gives us the same emblem when it speaks of Israel being "in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord". Such ought to be the effect of our presence. We are meant to gladden, to adorn, to refresh this parched, prosaic world, with a freshness brought from the chambers of the sunrise. The dew, formed, in the silence of the darkness while men sleep, falling as willingly on a bit of dead wood as anywhere, hanging its pearls on every poor spike of grass, and dressing everything on which it lies with strange beauty, each separate globule tiny and evanescent, but each flashing back the light, and each a perfect sphere: feeble one by one, but united mighty to make the pastures of the wilderness rejoice—so, created in silence by an unseen influence, feeble when taken in detail, but strong in their myriads, glad to occupy the lowliest place, and each "bright with something of celestial light", Christian men and women are to be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord. *Alexander McLaren.*

Verse 3. *The dew of thy youth.* There does not, indeed, appear to me any reason to doubt that, in this place, David extols the divine favour displayed in increasing the number of Christ's people; and hence, in consequence of their extraordinary increase, he compares the youth or race which would be born to him to the dew. As men are struck with astonishment at seeing the earth moistened and refreshed with dew, though its descent be imperceptible, even so, David declares that an innumerable offspring shall be born to Christ, who shall be spread over the whole earth. The youth,

therefore, which, like the dewdrops, are innumerable, are here designated the dew of childhood, or of youth. *John Calvin.*

Verse 3. *From the womb of the morning* is, with the utmost pertinency, applied to the conception and production of dews; agreeably to a delicate line in that great master of just description and lively painting, Mr. Thomson: "The meek eyed morn appears, mother of dews." We meet with a fine expression in the book of Job, which may serve to confirm this remark; and may illustrate the propriety of the phrase used in this connection: "Hath the rain a father, or who hath begot ten the drops of dew?" It seems, the oriental writers delighted to represent the dew as a kind of birth, as the offspring of the morning. And if so, surely there could be no image in the whole compass of the universe better adapted to the psalmist's purpose, or more strongly significant of those multitudes of proselytes, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; by the powerful energy of his word and Spirit. Upon this supposition, the whole verse describes the willing subjection, the gracious accomplishments, and the vast number of Christ's converts. *James Hervey (1713-14—1758), in "Meditations and contemplations."*

Verse 3. *The dew of thy youth.* The most apparent reference is to multitude. Compare Ps 72:16, and the proverbial use of the dew together with the sand of the sea shore to express a vast number. The people of the Messiah are a great number that no man can number: Re 7:9. But this is only the common enwrapping veil of a further sense. We must further note, First, THE ORIGIN OF THE DEW. From what comes it? From earthly matter, vapour and mist, as the new born soldier of Christ comes from the confused, dark substance of the old nature. By what is it produced? Through the influence of the heavenly warmth of the beams of the morning sun: so the people of God owe themselves to the light from above. In the vivifying light of heaven, the dewdrops are begotten, and from it they come more properly than from the earth water. How are they produced? Invisibly, wonderfully, by the secret, incomprehensible influence of the divine power. We have by no means exhausted the figure, for we notice, Secondly, THE DESIGN OF THE DEW. It is for the fertilizing and refreshing of the earth. The spiritual Israel are a fructifying, quickening dew among men. It is also for the ornament of the earth, which the dew bestrews as with precious stones; and this beauty is caused because each little drop of dew reflects the morning sun and is an earthly reflection of the heavenly light. Condensed from *Rudolph Stier.*

Verse 3 (last clause). With singular beauty and propriety does the psalmist compare the first preachers of the gospel to dew. In the first place, they may be compared to the drops of dew on account of their multitude. But, in order to judge of the correctness of the comparison in this respect, we must consider, that, in the Holy Land, the dews are remarkably abundant. A French traveller, {1} has observed of Judea, that in the morning the ground is as much moistened by dew, as if it had rained. We are informed in the sacred history, that, when the Dayspring from on high visited the

earth, many were the followers of Christ; and that very soon after his ascension into heaven, "multitudes both of men and women were added to the Lord". Justly then may those who hastened to the blessed Jesus, when the glorious light of his gospel first dawned upon the world, or immediately on the commencement of his mediatorial kingdom, be compared in number to the drops of dew, which at the dawn of day fall to the earth. It is mentioned also in this verse, that the first subjects of the Messiah were to present themselves adorned "with the beauties of holiness"; vřq yddhk in the splendours of holiness. In brightness, then, as well as in multitude, did they resemble the glittering drops of the morning dew. Our great poet has combined these two ideas in his beautiful comparison of an host innumerable to the "Stars of morning, dewdrops which the sun impearls". {2} The formation of the dew is represented in Scripture as the work of God, and not of man: and its descending to refresh and fertilize the earth is mentioned as his peculiar gift and in opposition to human means of rendering the earth more fruitful. "Who, "saith Job, "hath begotten the drops of dew?" (ch. 38. 28) And the prophet Micah declares, that "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men"

{1} Eugene Rogers.

{2} Milton's "Paradise Lost, "Book v., line 745.

(ch. 5. 7). Well, then, might the term be applied by the Psalmist to those whom "God of his own will begat with the word of truth"; and who were his appointed instruments, by their preaching, to cause "the desert to rejoice and to blossom abundantly"; and "the wilderness to become a fruitful field." Let it also be remembered, that those whom the Psalmist compares to dew are described under the image of young soldiers, going forth to fight the battles of a victorious prince. Now this comparison is used in 2Sa 17:11,12: "I counsel, "said Hushai to Ahithophel, "that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth upon the ground". It is perhaps not undeserving of notice, that amongst the Romans those troops who first attacked the enemy, and who were composed of young men, were, from a supposed resemblance to dew, called Rorarii. It is not incumbent upon me to investigate the reason of their receiving that name; it is sufficient to point out its similarity with the expression of the psalmist, which is applied to those who were first to engage in the conflict with the enemies of the Gospel of Christ. *Richard Dixon*, 1811.

Verse 3.

Thee, in thy power's triumphant day,
The willing nations shall obey;
And, when thy rising beams they view,

Shall all (redeemed from error's night)
Appear as numberless and bright
As crystal drops of morning dew.

—*N. Brady and N. Tate.*

Verse 3.

Lord, let thy day of power be known,
Thy people be confessed;
Eager and valiant—priests each one,
In holy garments dressed.
Countless they shine, as dews from heaven
When eastern skies grow bright—
More glorious than those dews are given,
Sparkling in morning light.

—*George Rawson, in "Hymns, Verses, and Chants," 1876.*

Verse 4. *The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, etc.* It should be diligently considered, that God has consecrated Christ, priest by an oath, and that this was done for our sakes; First, That we might know how exceedingly momentous was this transaction, and the more reverently and with the stronger faith believe it. Secondly, That we might acknowledge the goodness of God, who, being most truthful in himself, and concerning whose faithfulness it is the greatest crime to doubt, nevertheless has been pleased to speak to us not only with a bare word, but also, after the manner of men, to confirm his decree by an oath. *Rivetus.*

Verse 4. *Sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever.* God might have made the levitical priest by oath, and yet he might have been changed, but if he had made him by oath to be a priest for ever, then he could not have repented, that is, changed; but he must of necessity have been a priest for ever. Therefore you must take special notice, that God did not only swear that Christ should be a priest, or that he should be a priest for a long time, but a priest "for ever; "so that there should never be any priest joined with him, or come after him. So that if we consider the oath, and the thing confirmed by this oath, two things will be manifest:

1. That Christ's priesthood is personal, and settled in one single person for ever; so that he can have no fellow nor copartner, nor any successor in his priesthood.
2. That, by this oath, God did limit his own supreme and absolute power in this particular; and took away the use and exercise of it, and that for ever.

For now he hath no power to make Christ no priest, or take away his priesthood at will and pleasure: and in this God discovered his unspeakable love unto Christ, in that he did so much honour him, and so highly reward him. By this he also displayed his abundant mercy to man; for by this oath known

unto man, he signifies that man shall never be destitute of a powerful and effectual priest, able for ever to save; and this doth minister unto sinful man most sweet and heavenly comfort. *George Lawson*, 1662.

Verse 4. The form and manner of our Saviour's investiture or consecration was most honourable and glorious, God the Father performing the rites; which were not imposition of hands, and breathing on him the Holy Ghost, but a solemn testimony, with a protestation, "Thou art a priest": ceremonies never used by any but God, nor in the investiture of any but Christ, nor in his investiture into any office but the priesthood. At his coronation we hear nothing, but the Lord said, "Sit thou on my right hand": the rule of the whole world is imposed upon our Saviour by command; and even in this did Christ show his obedience to his Father, that he took upon him the government of his church. But at the consecration of Christ we have a great deal more of ceremony and solemnity, God his Father taketh an oath, and particularly expresses the nature and condition of his office, a priesthood for ever after the order of Melchizedek: and he confirmeth it unto him for ever, saying, "Thou art a priest for ever."—*Daniel Featley*, in "*Claris Mystica*." 1636.

Verse 4. What doctrine doth the Scripture afford more comfortable to a drooping soul than this, that God hath sworn his Son a priest for ever, to sanctify our persons, and purge our sins, and tender all our petitions to his Father? What sin is so heinous, for which such a priest cannot satisfy by the oblation of himself? what cause so desperate, in which such an advocate if he will plead, may not prevail? We may be sure God will not be hard to be intreated of us, who himself hath appointed us such an intercessor, to whom he can deny nothing; and to that end hath appointed him to sit at his right hand to make intercession for us. *Abraham Wright*.

Verse 4. *And will not repent.* The meaning of this phrase is, that the priesthood of Christ is not like that of Aaron, which was after a time to expire, and is now actually with all the ceremonial law abolished, but a priesthood never to be altered or changed. *Daniel Featley*.

Verse 4. *Thou art a priest.* The reasons which moved our Lord to take upon him the office of priest are conceived to be these.

1. Because the salvation and redemption of mankind, wrought by the sacrifice of his priesthood., being a most noble work, and not inferior to the creation, it was not fit that any should have the honour of it, but the Son of God.
2. Neither was it agreeable that any should offer him, who was the only sacrifice that could expiate the sins of the whole world, but himself: therefore by offering himself he added infinite worth to the sacrifice, and great honour to the priesthood of the Gospel.

For, as the gold sanctifieth not the altar, but the altar the gold; so it may be truly said without impeachment to the dignity of that calling, that Christ was rather an honour to the priesthood, than the priesthood an addition to him. For what got he by the priesthood which cost him his life? What

preferment could it be to him, to take upon him an office, whereby he was to abase himself below himself, and be put to an ignominious and accursed death? What were we vile miscreants, conceived and born in original sin, and soiled with the filth of numberless actual transgressions, that to purge and cleanse our polluted souls and defiled consciences, the second person in the Trinity should be made a Priest? It was wonderful humility in him to wash his disciples feet; but in his divine person to wash our unclean souls, is as far above human conceit, as it seemeth below divine majesty. There is nothing so impure as a foul conscience; no matter so filthy, no corruption so rotten and unsavoury as is found in the sores of an exulcerated mind: yet the Son of God vouchsafed to wash and bathe them in his own blood. O bottomless depth of humility and mercy! Other priests were appointed by men for the service of God, but he the blood of beasts to save men, but he shed his own blood to save us, more like beasts than men: other priests offered sacrifice for themselves, he offered himself for a sacrifice: other priests were fed by the sacrifices which the people brought, but he feeds us with the sacrifice of his own body and blood: lastly, others were appointed priests but for a time, he was ordained a priest for ever. *Daniel Featley.*

Verse 4. *Thou art a priest.* This word, "Thou art," is "verbum constitutum", a "constituting word", whereon the priesthood of Christ was founded. And it may be considered,

1. As declarative of God's eternal decree, with the covenant between the Father and the Son, whereby he was designed unto this office.
2. As demonstrative of his mission, or his actual sending to the discharge of his office. These words are the symbol and solemn sign of God's conferring that honour upon him, which gave him his instalment.
3. As predictive, for there is included in them a supposition that God would prepare a body for him, wherein he might exercise his priesthood, and which he might offer up unto him. *John Owen.*

Verse 4. *Melchizedek.* Some heretics of old affirmed that he was the Holy Ghost. Others, that he was an angel. Others, that he was Shem, the son of Noah. Others, that he was a Canaanite, extraordinarily raised up by God to be a priest of the Gentiles. Others, that he was Christ himself, manifested by a special dispensation and privilege unto Abraham in the flesh, who is said to have seen his day, and rejoiced, Joh 8:56. Difference there is also about Salem, the place of which he was king. Some take it for Jerusalem, as Josephus and most of the ancients. Others for a city in the half tribe of Manasseh, within the river Jordan, where Hierom reports that some ruins of the palace of Melchizedek were in his days conceived to remain. Tedious I might be in insisting on this point who Melchizedek was. But when I find the Holy Ghost purposely concealing his name, genealogy, beginning, ending, and descent, and that to special purpose, I cannot but wonder that men should toil themselves in the dark to find out that of which they have not the least ground of solid conjecture, and the inevidence whereof is expressly recorded, to make Melchizedek thereby the fitter type of Christ's

everlasting priesthood. *Edward Reynolds*.

Verse 4. Melchizedek. These things concerning are certain:

First, That he was a mere man, and no more; for,

1. "Every high priest" was to be "taken from among men," Heb 5:1;—so that the Son of God himself could not have been a priest had he not assumed our nature:

2. That if he were more than a man, there would be no mystery in his being introduced in Scripture as, "without father, without mother, without pedigree," for none but men have such:

3. Without this conception of him there is no force in the apostle's argument against the Jews.

Secondly, That he came not to his office by the right of primogeniture (which includes a genealogy) or by any way of succession, but was raised up and immediately called of God thereunto; for in that respect Christ is said to be a priest after his order. Thirdly, That he had no successor on the earth, nor could have; for there was no law to constitute an order of succession, and he was a priest only after an extraordinary call. These things belong unto faith in this matter, and no more... The first personal instituted type of Christ was a priest; this was Melchizedek. There were before real instituted types of his work, as sacrifices; and there were moral types of his person, as Adam, Abel, and Noah, which represented him in sundry things; but the first person who was solemnly designed to teach and represent him, by what he was and did, was a priest. And that which God taught herein was, that the foundation of all that the Lord Christ had to do in and for the church was laid in his priestly office, whereby he made atonement and reconciliation for sin. Everything else that he doth is built on the supposition of his priesthood. And we must begin in the application where God begins in the exhibition. An interest in the effects of the priestly office of Christ is that which in the first place we ought to look after. This being attained, we shall be willing to be taught and ruled by him. It may not be amiss to observe the likeness between Melchizedek and Christ. As for our Lord;

1. He was said to be, and he really was, and he only, first the king of righteousness, and then the king of peace, seeing he alone brought in everlasting righteousness and made peace with God for sinners. In his kingdom alone are these things to be found.

2. He was really and truly the priest of the most high God; and properly he was so alone. He offered that sacrifice, and made that atonement, which was signified by all the sacrifices offered by holy men from the foundation of the world.

3. He blesseth all the faithful, as Abraham, the father of the faithful, was blessed by Melchizedek. In him were they to be blessed, by him are they blessed,—through him delivered from the curse, and all the fruits of it; nor are they partakers of any blessing but from him.

4. He receive, all the homage of his people, all their grateful acknowledgments of the love and favour of God, in the conquest of their spiritual adversaries, and deliverance from them, as Melchizedek received the tenth of the spoils from Abraham.

5. He was really without progenitors or predecessors in his office; nor would I exclude that mystical sense from the intention of the place, that he was without father as to his human nature, and without mother as to his divine.

6. He was a priest without genealogy, or derivation of his pedigree from the loins of Aaron, or any other that ever was a priest in the world, and moreover, mysteriously, was of a generation which none can declare.

7. He had, in his divine person, as the high priest of the church, neither beginning of days nor end of life, as no such thing is reported of Melchizedek; for the death which he underwent, in the discharge of his office, being not the death of his whole person, but of his human nature only, no interruption of his endless office did ensue thereon. For although the person of the Son of God died, whence God is said to "redeem his church with his own blood," Ac 20:28; yet he died not in his whole person: but in his divine nature was still alive. Absolutely, therefore, and in respect of his office, he had neither beginning of days nor end of life.

8. He was really the Son of God, as Melchizedek in many circumstances was made like to the Son of God.

9. He alone abideth a priest forever; whereof we must particularly treat afterwards. Condensed from *John Owen*.

Verse 5. *The Lord...shall strike through kings*, etc. He really threatens such great heads in an awful manner, that if they will not hear, and cannot obey, they shall be terrified to death. And assuredly he would willingly, by these means, allure them to repentance, and persuade them to turn, and to cease from raging against the Lord. But if they will not, they shall know against whom it is that they go on... This is our consolation which upholds us, and makes our heart joyful and glad against the persecution and rage of the world, that we have such a Lord, who not only delivers us from sin and eternal death, but also protects us, and delivers us in sufferings and temptations, so that we do not sink under them. And though men rage in a most savage manner against Christians, yet neither the gospel nor Christianity shall perish; but their heads shall be destroyed against it. If their persecutions were to go on unceasingly Christianity could not remain, wherefore he gives them a time, and says he will connive at them for a while, but not longer than till the hour comes which he here calls the "day of his wrath" And if they will not now cease in the name of God, they must then cease in the name of the devil. *Martin Luther*.

Verse 5. *Shall strike through kings*. To strike through notes a complete victory and full confusion of the enemy, all incurable wound, that they may stagger, and fall, and rise up no more, and that affliction may not arise a second time, Na 1:9; 1Sa 26:8. The only difficulty is what is meant by "kings". For which we must note that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, and his war spiritual, and therefore his enemies for the most part spiritual. *Edward Reynolds*.

Verse 5. *In the day of his wrath.* Note that it is not simply said, he will strike through kings in his wrath, but in the day of his wrath. Therefore as there is a time of grace and patience, so there is also an appointed time of wrath and vengeance of God. Frequent mention is made of this in the sacred Scriptures, that we may be admonished that the wicked will not be left always unpunished, because they contemn the patience of God, aye, provoke his anger; but that there will be a time when they will experience the wrath of God. Thus, armed with patience, we should persevere in the practice of piety, nor be turned aside from it, either by the example of the wicked, or from fear of them. *Wolfgang Museulus.*

Verses 5, 6, 7.

The sentenced heathen he shall slay,
And fill with carcasses his way,
Till he hath struck earth's tyrants dead;
But in the highway brooks shall first,
Like a poor pilgrim, slake his thirst,
And then in triumph raise his head.

—*N. Brady and N. Tate.*

Verse 6. *He shall fill the places with the dead bodies.* This notes the greatness of the victory, that none should be left to bury the dead. There shall be an universal destruction of wicked men together in the day of God's wrath, they shall be bound up in bundles, and heaped for damnation, Mt 13:30; Ps 37:38; Isa 1:28; Ps 66:17. And it notes the shame and dishonour of the enemy, they shall be like dung upon the face of the earth, and shall be beholden to their victors for a base and dishonourable burial, as we see in the great battle with Gog and Magog, Eze 39:11-16. *Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 6. *Dead bodies.* Either the corpses of the vanquished enemy; or (possibly) the living bodies of men in a state of servitude, as in Ge 47:18; Ne 9:37. (The construction as in Ex 15:9) In the latter case, the meaning may be: that the bodies of those who had been enslaved by the Usurper, Death, were now claimed back by their rightful Lord. The full number is claimed back. The "last enemy" being destroyed, "all things" are brought beneath Christ's sway. *William Kay.*

Verse 6. *The heads.* Rather, the head; doubtless, the head of the Old Serpent (according to the prophecy in Ge 3:15), who acts in all who resist Christ. The verb "machats", which is used here, is employed to describe the prophetic and typical act of Jael, smiting the head of God's enemy, Sisera (Jud 5:26 4:22); and it is used in Ps 68:21, which describes Christ's victory, "God shall wound the head of his enemies"; and also by Hab 3:13, "Thou woundest the head out of the house of the wicked."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 7. *He shall drink of the brook,* etc. He describeth the passion of Christ and his glory. "In the way", saith he, that is, in his life while he is in this misery, "he shall drink out of the brook, "that is, he

shall suffer and be overcome. For to drink out of the cup is to suffer: but to drink out of the brook, is to be altogether full of trouble, to be vexed and tormented and utterly to be overwhelmed with a strong stream of troubles. Thus was it in David's mind to declare the passion of Christ. Afterward he saith, "therefore shall he lift up the head". After the passion followeth the glory, with the resurrection and ascension. Paul, (Php 2:8) speaketh of both, and saith: "Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name", etc. *Myles Coverdale*, 1487-1568.

Verse 7. I conceive that the "brook" here spoken of was not intended to give us the idea of a clear brook of refreshing water, which was to afford the Redeemer strength to endure the amazing conflict; as the drinking of the water enabled Gideon's chosen band of men to go forth to battle against the Midianites. No; in our Lord's case it was a polluted and turbid stream. Like the water of Marsh, which the Israelites could not drink, it was bitter; for sin had made it so. It bore along with it, as it flowed, the curse of the broken law, and the vengeance of offended justice, and the wrath of the eternal God. It was pain, sorrow, suffering, death. This was the "brook" of which he drank. The "cup" which his Father gave him to drink was filled with the bitter water of this "brook"; and he may be said to have first put his lips to it, when he declared to his disciples, in his way to Gethsemane, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." But it is stated in the text that this "brook" was "in the way." It is described here as running by the path in which the Redeemer was going in order to the accomplishment of his great work of man's salvation; that work which he had engaged in the everlasting covenant to perform; and by the performance of which, man could alone be accepted of God. The sin of man was the source from whence this water issued; and it flowed along in the Saviour's "way, "through the wilderness of this world to his kingdom of glory in the next; as the brook Kidron, red with the blood of the typical sacrifices, flowed in his way to Calvary. *Fountain Elwin*, 1842.

Verse 7. In the expositions of most of the ancients and moderns, we are told that he drank of the brook,

- (1) of mortality by his incarnation;
 - (2) of strictness and hardness in all his passage, by his voluntary wants and poverty;
 - (3) of the strong potion of the law, by his exact obedience and subjection;
 - (4) of the Jews' malice, by their continual indignities;
 - (5) of the floods of Belial, by apparent and unknown temptations;
 - (6) of the heaviest wrath of his Father, by his unspeakable agony and bloody sweat in the garden.
- And last of all, of death itself on the cross, by his sad and extreme passion. *John Prideaux*.

Verse 7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way.* These words were understood by Junius and Tremellius long ago as meaning, "He shall steadily press on to victory, as generals of energy act, who in pursuing routed foes, stay not to indulge themselves in meat or drink." Hengstenberg and

others substantially approve of this view. While a few hold that allusion may be made to Samson at Ramath Lehi (as if the words spoke of Christ having a secret spring of refreshment when needful). Most seem inclined to take Gideon as the type that best expresses the idea. Pressing on to victory, Messiah, like Gideon, "faint yet pursuing" as he passed over Jordan, shall not desist till all is won. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth." Perhaps the full idea is this:—His career was irresistibly successful like that of Gideon; for he allowed nothing to detain him, nor did he shrink in the enterprise from any fatigue, nor did he stop to indulge the flesh. If we take it thus, there is both the Humiliation and the Exaltation of the Son of Man contained in the words; and Php 4:8,9 supplies a commentary. *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 7. *Schnurrer*, says Rosenmuller, "seems to have perceived the meaning of the verse, which he gives in the following words:—Though fatigued with the slaughter of his enemies, yet he will not desist; but, having refreshed himself with water from the nearest stream, will exert his renovated strength in the pursuit of the routed foe."—*Messianic Psalms.*

Verse 7. Christ shall "lift up the head" by way of triumphing and rejoicing, when he shall have taken full vengeance of his adversaries, and freed, not himself only, but the whole body of his church from the assaults and dangers of all enemies. We see now that oftentimes, though not in himself, yet in his members, he is fain to hang down the head, and to wear the badges of reproach and shame, whilst the ungodly vaunt themselves (Job 31:2-6) and in their hearts despise the righteous, accounting more vilely of them than of the dust of their feet. *Robert Abbot.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Here the Holy Ghost begins with the kingdom of Christ, which he describeth and magnifieth,—

1. By his unction, and ordination, thereunto, by the word or decree of his Father: "The Lord said".
2. By the greatness of his person in himself, while yet he is nearly allied in blood and nature unto us; "My Lord".
3. By the glory, power, and heavenliness of his kingdom, for in the administration thereof he sitteth at the right hand of his Father: "Sit thou at my right hand".
4. By the continuance and victories thereof: "Until I make thy foes thy footstool."—*Edward Reynolds.*

Verse 1. *My Lord.*

1. Christ's condescending nearness to us does not destroy our reverence: he was David's son, and yet he calls him Lord; he is our brother, bridegroom, and so on, and yet our Lord.
2. Christ's glory does not diminish his nearness to us, or familiarity with us. Sitting on the throne as Lord, he is yet "my Lord."
3. It is under the double aspect as Lord, and yet ours, that Jehovah regards him and speaks with him,

and ordains him to the priesthood. Ever in these two lights let us regard him.

Verse 1. *Sit*, etc.

1. Our Lord's quiet amid passing events.
2. The abundance of his present power.
3. The working of all history towards the ultimate end, which will be—
4. His easy victory: putting his foot on his foes as readily as we tread on a footstool.

Verse 2.

1. What is that rod? The gospel (Illustrated by Moses' rod).
2. Who sends it? "The Lord."
3. Whence it comes? Out of the church of God.
4. What is the result? Jesus reigns.

Verse 3. A willing people and an immutable Leader.

1. The promise made to Christ concerning his people: "Thy people shall be willing," etc.
 - (a) A promise of time: "In the day," etc.
 - (b) Of persons: "Thy people."
 - (c) Of disposition: "Shall be willing."
 - (d) Of character: "In the beauties of holiness."
 - (e) The majestic figure employed: "From the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."
2. The promise made to Christ concerning himself: "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." Jesus Christ has the dew of his youth personally, doctrinally, and mystically, being surrounded by new converts, who are as the early dew. *Spurgeon's Sermons*, No. 74.

Verse 3. This is a prophecy of the subjects of Christ's kingdom.

1. Who they are; "Thy people."
 - (a) A people. This denotes distinction, separation, similarity, organization. They are not a confused rabble, but a united community.
 - (b) His people. By gift, by purchase, by effectual calling.
2. What they are.
 - (a) A loyal people: "willing."
 - (b) A conquered people: "in the day of thy power."
 - (c) A holy people: "in the beauties of holiness."
 - (d) A numerous people: "from the womb of the morning," etc. The number of converts at the first proclamation of Christ's gospel was but the dew of his youth. *G.R.*

Verse 3. First, the internal evidence of Christ's kingdom is in his people's willingness: "Thy people shall be willingness—thy people shall be a people all willing"—all volunteers, not pressed men. Secondly, the external evidence of it lies in his people's holiness; "the beauties of holiness; "or as it

may be rendered—"in the magnificence of his sanctuary, "for the ornaments of the sanctuary and the dress of the priests were very splendid. When you once give yourselves to God, you become temples of God; and sanctity must adorn that heart which is a living temple of the Holy Ghost. *J. Bennett*, in a Sermon, 1829.

Verse 3. All true followers of Jesus are

- (1) priests—beauties of holiness are their sacerdotal robes;
- (2) soldiers—"in the day of thine armies";
- (3) volunteers;
- (4) benefactors—as the dew.

—Suggested by a paper in *The Baptist Magazine*.

Verse 3. Here we have a cluster of subjects:—the willingness of the Lord's people, the beauty of holiness, young converts the life and glory of the church, the mystery of conversion, and so on.

Verse 4. The eternal priesthood of Christ. On what its perpetuity is founded and the blessed results flowing therefrom.

Verse 4. These words offer three points of special observation.

1. The ceremony used at the consecration of our Lord: "The Lord sware."
2. The office conferred upon him by this rite or ceremony: "Thou art a priest."
3. The prerogatives of his office; which office is here declared to be,
 - (a) Perpetual, "for ever."
 - (b) Regular, "after the order."
 - (c) Royal, "of Melchizedek."

—*Daniel Featley*.

Verse 4. Melchizedek: a fruitful subject. See notes.

Verse 5. The certain overthrow of every power which opposes the gospel.

Verse 6. The fearful calamities which have happened to nations through their sinful rejection of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 7. Christ's alacrity, self denial, and simplicity, the causes of his success. Example to be imitated.

Verse 7. Christ's humiliation and exaltation.

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND TENTH PSALM

The Exaltation of the Kingdom and Priesthood of Christ. In certaine Sermons upon the 110 Psalme: Preached in the Cathedrall Church and city of Worcester, in the time of Christmasse: anno Domini: 1590. By Rob. Abbot, doctor of Diuinitie, sometime felow of Baliol Coiledge in Oxford. Londini, Impensis G. Bishop. 1601. *4to*.

An Explication of the Hundreth and Tenth Psalme. . . . Being the Substance of several Sermons preached at Lincolns Inne; by Edward Reynolds *afterwards Bishop of Norwich*. 4to. 2nd edition. London, 1035. *Also in "Reynolds' Works."*] In the works of John Boys, 160, folio, pp. 809-821, there is an Exposition of this Psalm. An incorruptible Key Composed of the CX. Psalme, wherewith You may open the rest of the holy Scriptures... By Samuel Gorton, Gent. and at the time of the penning hereof, in the place of. Judicature (upon Aquethneck, alias Road Island) of Providence Plantations in the Nanhyganset Bay, New England. Printed in the Yeere 1647. 4to. A new interpretation of the Sixty-eighth Psalm. To which is added, an Exposition of the Hundred and tenth Psalm, proposed in a Sermon, preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, on Sunday, October 27, 1811. By the Rev. Richard Dixon, A.M., F.R.S. . . . Oxford, 1811. *4to*.

In "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms," by the Rev. Dr. Edersheim. . . . London: 1873, there is a short meditation on this Psalm.

Psalm 111

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. There is no title to this psalm, but it is an alphabetical hymn of praise, having for its subject the works of the Lord in creation, providence, and grace. The sweet singer dwells upon the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration. Many are ignorant of what their Creator has done, and hence they are foolish in heart, and silent as to the praises of God: this evil can only be removed by a remembrance of God's works, and a diligent study of them; to this, therefore, the psalm is meant to arouse us. It may be called *The Psalm of God's Works* intended to excite us to the work of praise.

DIVISION. The psalmist begins with an invitation to praise, Ps 111:1; and then proceeds to furnish us with matter for adoration in God's works and his dealings with his people, Ps 111:2-9. He closes his song with a commendation of the worship of the Lord, and of the men who practice it.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD, or, Hallelujah!* All ye his saints unite in adoring Jehovah, who worketh so gloriously. Do it now, do it always: do it heartily, do it unanimously, do it eternally. Even if others refuse, take care that ye have always a song for your God. Put away all doubt, question, murmuring,

and rebellion, and give yourselves up to the praising of Jehovah, both with your lips and in your lives. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart. The sweet singer commences the song, for his heart is all on flame: whether others will follow him or not, he will at once begin and long continue. What we preach we should practise. The best way to enforce an exhortation is to set an example; but we must let that example be of the best kind, or we may lead others to do the work in a limping manner. David brought nothing less than his whole heart to the duty; all his love went out towards God, and all his zeal, his skill, and his ardour went with it. Jehovah the one and undivided God cannot be acceptably praised with a divided heart, neither should we attempt so to dishonour him; for our whole heart is little enough for his glory, and there can be no reason why it should not all be lifted up in his praise. All his works are praiseworthy, and therefore all our nature should adore him. In the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation;—whether with few or with many he would pour forth his whole heart and soul in praise, and whether the company was made up of select spirits or of the general mass of the people he would continue in the same exercise. For the choicest society there can be no better engagement than praise, and for the general assembly nothing can be more fitting. For the church and for the congregation, for the family or the community, for the private chamber of pious friendship, or the great hall of popular meeting, the praise of the Lord is suitable; and at the very least the true heart should sing hallelujah in any and every place. Why should we fear the presence of men? The best of men will join us in our song, and if the common sort, will not do so, our example will be a needed rebuke to them. In any case let us praise God, whether the hearers be a little band of saints or a mixed multitude. Come, dear reader, he who pens this comment is in his heart magnifying the Lord: will you not pause for a moment and join in the delightful exercise?

Verse 2. *The works of the LORD are great.* In design, in size, in number, in excellence, all the works of the Lord are great. Even the little things of God are great. In some point of view or other each one of the productions of his power, or the deeds of his wisdom, will appear to be great to the wise in heart. Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Those who love their Maker delight in his handiwork, they perceive that there is more in them than appears upon the surface, and therefore they bend their minds to study and understand them. The devout naturalist ransacks nature, the earnest student of history pries into hidden facts and dark stories, and the man of God digs into the mines of Scripture, and hoards up each grain of its golden truth. God's works are worthy of our researches, they yield us instruction and pleasure wonderfully blended, and they grow upon, appearing to be far greater, after investigation than before. Men's works are noble from a distance; God's works are great when sought out. Delitzsch reads the passage, "Worthy of being sought after in all their purposes," and this also is a grand truth, for the end and design which God hath in all that he makes or does is equally admirable with the work itself. The hidden wisdom of God is the most marvellous part of his works, and hence those who do not look below the surface miss the best part

of what he would teach us. Because the works are great they cannot be seen all at once, but must be looked into with care, and this seeking out is of essential service to us by educating our faculties, and strengthening our spiritual eye gradually to bear the light of the divine glory. It is well for us that all things cannot be seen at a glance, for the search into their mysteries is as useful to us as the knowledge which we thereby attain. The history of the Lord's dealings with his people is especially a fit subject for the meditation of reverent minds who find therein a sweet solace, and a never failing source of delight.

Verse 3. *His work is honourable and glorious.* His one special work, the salvation of his people, is here mentioned as distinguished from his many other works. This reflects honour and glory upon him. It is deservedly the theme of the highest praise, and compels those who understand it and experience it to ascribe all honour and glory unto the Lord. Its conception, its sure foundations, its gracious purpose, its wise arrangements, its gift of Jesus as Redeemer, its application of redemption by the Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification, and all else which make up the one glorious whole, all redound to the infinite honour of Him who contrived and carried out so astounding a method of salvation. No other work can be compared with it: it honours both the Saviour and the saved, and while it brings glory to God it also brings us to glory. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, and there is no salvation like that which he has wrought for his people. And his righteousness endureth for ever. In the work of grace righteousness is not forgotten, nor deprived of its glory; rather, it is honoured in the eyes of the intelligent universe. The bearing of guilt by our great Substitute proved that not even to effect the purposes of his grace would the Lord forget his righteousness; no future strain upon his justice can ever be equal to that which it has already sustained in the bruising of his dear Son; it must henceforth assuredly endure for ever. Moreover, the righteousness of God in the whole plan can never now be suspected of failure, for all that it requires is already performed, its demands are satisfied by the double deed of our Lord in enduring the vengeance due, and in rendering perfect obedience to the law. Caprice does not enter into the government of the Lord, the rectitude of it is and must for ever be beyond all question. In no single deed of God can unrighteousness be found, nor shall there ever be: this is the very glory of his work, and even its adversaries cannot gainsay it. Let believers, therefore, praise him evermore, and never blush to speak of that work which is so honourable and glorious.

Verse 4. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.* He meant them to remain in the recollection of his people, and they do so: partly because they are in themselves memorable, and because also he has taken care to record them by the pen of inspiration, and has written them upon the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit. By the ordinances of the Mosaic law, the coming out of Egypt, the sojourn in the wilderness, and other memorabilia of Israel's history were constantly brought before the minds of the people, and their children were by such means instructed in the

wonders which God had wrought in old time. Deeds such as God has wrought are not to be admired for an hour and then forgotten, they are meant to be perpetual signs and instructive tokens to all coming generations; and especially are they designed to confirm the faith of his people in the divine love, and to make them know that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. They need not fear to trust his grace for the future, for they remember it in the past. Grace is as conspicuous as righteousness in the great work of God, yea, a fulness of tender love is seen in all that he has done. He treats his people with great consideration for their weakness and infirmity; having the same pity for them as a father hath towards his children. Should we not praise him for this? A silver thread of lovingkindness runs through the entire fabric of God's work of salvation and providence, and never once is it left out in the whole piece. Let the memories of his saints bear witness to this fact with grateful joy.

Verse 5. *He hath given meat unto them that fear him.* Or *spoil*, as some read it, for the Lord's people both in coming out of Egypt and at other times have been enriched from their enemies. Not only in the wilderness with manna, but everywhere else by his providence he has supplied the necessities of his believing people. Somewhere or other they have had food convenient for them, and that in times of great scarcity. As for spiritual meat, that has been plentifully furnished them in Christ Jesus; they have been fed with the finest of the wheat, and made to feast on royal dainties. His word is as nourishing to the soul as bread to the body, and there is such an abundance of it that no heir of heaven shall ever be famished. Truly the fear of the Lord is wisdom, since it secures to a man the supply of all that he needs for soul and body. He will ever be mindful of his covenant. He could not let his people lack meat because he was in covenant with them, and they can never want in the future, for he will continue to act upon the terms of that covenant. No promise of the Lord shall fall to the ground, nor will any part of the great compact of eternal love be revoked or allowed to sink into oblivion. The covenant of grace is the plan of the great work which the Lord works out for his people, and it will never be departed from: the Lord has set his hand and seal to it, his glory and honour are involved in it, yea, his very name hangs upon it, and he will not even in the least jot or tittle cease to be mindful of it. Of this the feeding of his people is the pledge: he would not so continually supply their needs if he meant after all to destroy them. Upon this most blessed earnest let us settle our minds; let us rest in the faithfulness of the Lord, and praise him with all our hearts every time that we eat bread or feed upon his word.

Verse 6. *He hath shewed his people the power of his works.* They have seen what he is able to do and what force he is prepared to put forth on their behalf. This power Israel saw in physical works, and we in spiritual wonders, for we behold the matchless energy of the Holy Ghost and feel it in our own souls. In times of dire distress the Lord has put forth such energy of grace that we have been astonished at his power; and this was part of his intent in bringing us into such conditions that he

might reveal to us the arm of his strength. Could we ever have known it so well if we had not been in pressing need of his help? We may well turn this verse into a prayer and ask to see more and more the power of the Lord at work among us in these latter days. O Lord, let us now see how mightily thou canst work in the saving of sinners and in preserving and delivering thine own people. That he may give them the heritage of the heathen. He put forth all his power to drive out the Canaanites and bring in his people. Even thus may it please his infinite wisdom to give to his church the heathen for her inheritance in the name of Jesus. Nothing but great power can effect this, but it will surely be accomplished in due season.

Verse 7. *The works of his hands are verity and judgment.* Truth and justice are conspicuous in all that Jehovah does. Nothing like artifice or crooked policy can ever be seen in his proceedings; he acts faithfully and righteously towards his people, and with justice and impartiality to all mankind. This also should lead us to praise him, since it is of the utmost advantage to us to live under a sovereign whose laws, decrees, acts, and deeds are the essence of truth and justice. All his commandments are sure. All that he has appointed or decreed shall surely stand, and his precepts which he has proclaimed shall be found worthy of our obedience, for surely they are founded in justice and are meant for our lasting good. He is no fickle despot, commanding one thing one day and another another, but his commands remain absolutely unaltered, their necessity equally unquestionable, their excellence permanently proven, and their reward eternally secure. Take the word commandments to relate either to his decrees or his precepts, and we have in each case an important sense; but it seems more in accordance with the connection to take the first sense and consider the words to refer to the ordinances, appointments, or decrees of the great King.

Whatever the mighty Lord decrees,
Shall stand for ever sure.
The settled purpose of his heart
To ages shall endure.

Verse 8. *They stand fast for ever and ever.* That is to say, his purposes, commands, and courses of action. The Lord is not swayed by transient motives, or moved by the circumstances of the hour; immutable principles rule in the courts of Jehovah, and he pursues his eternal purposes without the shadow of a turning. Our works are too often as wood, hay, and stubble, but his doings are as gold, silver, and precious stones. We take up a purpose for a while and then exchange it for another, but he is of one mind, and none can turn him: he acts in eternity and for eternity, and hence what he works abides for ever. Much of this lasting character arises out of the fact which is next mentioned, namely, that they are done in truth and uprightness. Nothing stands but that which is upright. Falsehood soon vanishes, for it is a mere show, but truth has salt in it which preserves it from decay. God always acts according to the glorious principles of truth and integrity, and hence there is no need

of alteration or revocation; his works will endure till the end of time.

Verse 9. *He sent redemption unto his people.* When they were in Egypt he sent not only a deliverer, but an actual deliverance; not only a redeemer, but complete redemption. He has done the like spiritually for all his people, having first by blood purchased them out of the hand of the enemy, and then by power rescued them from the bondage of their sins. Redemption we can sing of as an accomplished act: it has been wrought for us, sent to us, and enjoyed by us, and we are in very deed the Lord's redeemed. He hath commanded his covenant for ever. His divine decree has made the covenant of his grace a settled and eternal institution: redemption by blood proves that the covenant cannot be altered, for it ratifies and establishes it beyond all recall. This, too, is reason for the loudest praise. Redemption is a fit theme for the heartiest music, and when it is seen to be connected with gracious engagements from which the Lord's truth cannot swerve, it becomes a subject fitted to arouse the soul to an ecstasy of gratitude. Redemption and the covenant are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing. Holy and reverend is his name. Well may he say this. The whole name or character of God is worthy of profoundest awe, for it is perfect and complete, whole or holy. It ought not to be spoken without solemn thought, and never heard without profound homage. His name is to be trembled at, it is something terrible; even those who know him best rejoice with trembling before him. How good men can endure to be called "reverend" we know not. Being unable to discover any reason why our fellow men should reverence *us*, we half suspect that in other men there is not very much which can entitle them to be called reverend, very reverend, right reverend, and so on. It may seem a trifling matter, but for that very reason we would urge that the foolish custom should be allowed to fall into disuse.

Verse 10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* It is its first principle, but it is also its head and chief attainment. The word "beginning" in Scripture sometimes means the chief; and true religion is at once the first element of wisdom, and its chief fruit. To know God so as to walk aright before him is the greatest of all the applied sciences. Holy reverence of God leads us to praise him, and this is the point which the psalm drives at, for it is a wise act on the part of a creature towards his Creator. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments. Obedience to God proves that our judgment is sound. Why should he not be obeyed? Does not reason itself claim obedience for the Lord of all? Only a man void of understanding will ever justify rebellion against the holy God. Practical godliness is the test of wisdom. Men may know and be very orthodox, they may talk and be very eloquent, they may speculate and be very profound; but the best proof of their intelligence must be found in their actually doing the will of the Lord. The former part of the psalm taught us the doctrine of God's nature and character, by describing his works: the second part supplies the practical lesson by drawing the inference that to worship and obey him is the dictate of true wisdom. We joyfully own that it is so. His praise endureth for ever. The praises of God will never cease,

because his works will always excite adoration, and it will always be the wisdom of men to extol their glorious Lord. Some regard this sentence as referring to those who fear the Lord—their praise shall endure for ever: and, indeed, it is true that those who lead obedient lives shall obtain honour of the Lord, and commendations which will abide for ever. A word of approbation from the mouth of God will be a mede of honour which will outshine all the decorations which kings and emperors can bestow. Lord, help us to study thy works, and henceforth to breathe out hallelujahs as long as we live.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This is the first alphabetical psalm which is regular throughout. The four former alphabetical psalms, namely, 9 and 10, 34 and 37, are irregular and defective in many particulars, for the rectification of which neither Hebrew MS editions nor ancient versions afford sanction and authority. It is singular that not only are Psalms 111 and 112 perfectly regular, but, furthermore, that not one various reading of note or importance occurs in either of these psalms.—John Noble Coleman.

Whole Psalm. The following translation is given to enable the reader to realize the alphabetical character of the psalm. It is taken from *The Psalms Chronologically Arranged. By Four Friends.*

All my heart shall praise Jehovah, 1

Before the congregation of the righteous; Deeds of goodness are the deeds of Jehovah, 2

Earnestly desired of all them that have pleasure therein; For his righteousness endureth for ever, 3

Glorious and honourable is his work; He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, 4

In Jehovah is compassion and goodness; Jehovah hath given meat to them that fear him, 5

Keeping his covenant for ever, Learning his people the power of his works, 6

Making them to possess the heritage of the heathen; Nought save truth and equity are the works of his hands, 7

Ordered and sure are his commands, Planted fast for ever and ever, 8

Righteous and true are his testimonies; Salvation hath he sent unto his people, 9

Their covenant hath he made fast for ever; Upright and holy is His name, 10

Verily, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, Yea, a good understanding have all they that do thereafter;

Zealously shall he be praised for ever.

Whole Psalm. The general opinion of interpreters is, that this and some of the following psalms were usually sung at the eating of the Paschal lamb, of which custom mention is also made, Mt 26, that Christ and the disciples sang a hymn before they went out into the garden.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm. The two psalms, Psalm 111 and Psalm 112, resemble one another in construction, alphabetical arrangement, and general tone and manner. They are connected in this way: Psalm 111

sets forth the greatness, mercy, and righteousness of God: Psalm 112 the reflection of these attributes in the greatness, Ps 112:2, mercy, Ps 112:5, and righteousness, Ps 112:4,9, of his chosen. The correspondence of purpose in the two psalms is important to the right appreciation of some difficulties connected with the latter psalm.—*Speaker's Commentary*.

Whole Psalm. The scope of this Psalm is to stir up all to praise God, and that for so many reasons as there are verses in the psalm. The exhortation is in the first words, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" The reasons follow in order. The psalm is composed so after the order of the Hebrew alphabet, as every sentence or half verse begins with a several letter of the A B C in order, and all the psalm is of praise only. Whence we learn in general,

1. Sometimes it is expedient to set all other things apart, and employ ourselves expressly to proclaim the praises of the Lord only; for so is done in this psalm.
2. The praises of the Lord are able to fill all the letters and words composed of letters, in all their possible junctures of composition; for so much doth the going through all the letters of the A B C point out unto us, he is Alpha and Omega, and all the middle letters of the A B C of praise.
3. The praises of the Lord are worthy to be kept in memory: for that this psalm may be the better remembered, it is composed after the manner of the A B C, and so it insinuated thus much to us.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD*, etc. The exhortation is immediately succeeded by the expression of a firm resolve; the psalmist having commenced by urging the duty of gratitude upon others—"*Praise ye the LORD*, "forthwith announces his determination to act upon his own advice—"I will praise the LORD with my whole heart." Such a conjunction of ideas is fraught with several most important lessons.

1. It teaches us, very emphatically, that our preaching, if it is to carry weight and conviction, must be backed and exemplified by our conduct; that we need never expect to persuade others by arguments which are too weak to influence ourselves.
2. Another inference is similarly suggested—that our own decision should be given without reference to the result of our appeal. The psalmist did not wait to ascertain whether those whom he addressed would attend to his exhortation, but, before he could receive a reply, declared unhesitatingly the course he would himself adopt.—*W.T. Maudson, in a Sermon on Thanksgiving, 1855*.

Verse 1. *With my whole heart*. That is, earnestly, and with a sincere affection; meaning also, that he would do it privately, and, as it were, within himself, as by the next words he notes that he will do it openly.—*Thomas Wilcocks*.

Verse 1. *With my whole heart*. We see the stress here laid upon a whole heart, and the want of which is the great canker of all vital godliness. Men are ever attempting to unite what the word of God has declared to be incapable of union—the love of the world and of God—to give half their heart to the

world, and the other half to God. Just see the energy, the entireness of every thought and feeling and effort which a man throws into a work in which he is deeply interested; the very phrase we use to describe such an one is, that "he gives his whole mind to it." Attempt to persuade him to divert his energies and divide his time with some other pursuit, and he would wonder at the folly and the ignorance that could suggest such a method of success. "Just take a hint from Satan," says some one; "see how he plies his powers on the individual, as if there were but that one, and as if he had nothing else to do but to ruin that one soul." It was a holy resolution of the Psalmist that he would praise God; and a wise one to add, "*with thy whole heart.*" And we have the result of this determination in the following verses of the psalm.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1. Two words are used, *assembly* and *congregation*. The former implies a more private meeting of worshippers, the latter the more public. The former may apply to the family circle of those who were celebrating the passover, the latter to the public worship connected with the feast.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2. *The works of the LORD are great.* Their greatness is known from comparison with the works and powers of men, which, verily, die and perish quickly. We should, therefore, admire, fear, confide, obey.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2. *The works of the LORD are great, etc.* Their greatness is equally manifest when we turn from the *immensity* to the *variety* of his works...How great are the works of him who gives to every plant its leaf and flower and fruit; to every animal its faculties and functions; to every man his understanding, affections, and will. What an accumulative idea of the magnitude of his works do we gather from the innumerable multitudes and endless diversities of being called into existence by his powers.—*Samuel Summers, 1837.*

Verse 2. *The works of the LORD are great.* The workman who never makes a small article, an inferior article, but makes all his articles both great and valuable, deserves much praise; and any one that will study God's works, which we think so little of by reason of their being so constantly before us, cannot fail to behold God's infinite power and wisdom in every one of them, even though he cannot comprehend them.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 2. *Great.* The word *lwdg* (*gadol*) *great*, has in the Hebrew so extensive a range of meaning, that in the English there is no single substitute expressive enough to take its place. It denotes greatness and augmentation of various kinds. In this passage *the works of Jehovah* are described as greatly "*magnified or augmented*" in their influences and effects on the minds of men who behold them. The *greatness* ascribed to these works, is a greatness in number, in character, in dignity, in beauty, in variety, in riches.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 2, 4. *Great...sought out. Remembered.* The works of Jehovah surpass the reach of human discovery, but are yet searched and explored with delight by all the members of his church; for, if they

are too great to be understood, they are also too great to be forgotten.—*Edward Garrard Marsh.*

Verse 2. *Sought out.* To see God in his creatures, and to love him and converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright state. This is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ, by faith, to bring us back to it; and therefore the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works; and none but the holy can rightly study or know them. Your studies of physics and other sciences are not worth a rush, if it be not God by them that you seek after. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God appearing to us in his works, and purposely to peruse them for the knowledge of God; this is the true and only philosophy, and the contrary is mere foolery, and so called again and again by God himself.—*Richard Baxter, 1615-1691.*

Verse 2. It does not follow, that because the study of nature is now of itself an insufficient guide to the knowledge of the Creator and the enjoyment of eternal felicity, such studies are either to be thrown aside, or considered as of no importance in a religious point of view. To overlook the astonishing scene of the universe, or to view it with indifference, is virtually to "disregard the works of Jehovah, and to refuse to consider the operations of his hands." It is a violation of Christian duty, and implies a reflection on the character of the Deity, for any one to imagine that he has nothing to do with God considered as manifested in the immensity of his works; for his word is pointed and explicit in directing the mind to such contemplations. "Hearken unto this, stand still, and consider the wonderful works of God." "Lift up thine eye on high, and behold who hath created these orbs." "Remember that thou magnify his works which men behold." "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Thy saints shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men the mighty operations and the glorious majesty of thy kingdom."—*Thomas Dick (1772) in "The Sidereal Heavens."*

Verse 2. *Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.* This is a true characteristic of the upright and pious. The works of God are said to be "*sought out of them*," when they regard them, call them to mind, and carefully, taking them one by one, investigate them; and at the same time explain them to others, and recount them: all which is included in the verb *vrđ*; for that verb, properly is *trivít* (to rub, beat, or bray) hence by thrashing and grinding he has investigated perfectly, and has rubbed out the kernel of it for the use and profit of another: whence it is used for *concionari*, etc.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2. *Sought out, ...have pleasure therein.* Philosophy seeks truth, Theology finds it, but Religion possesses it. Human things must be known to be loved, but divine things must be loved to be known.—*Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662.*

Verse 2-4. *Sought out...* The LORD is gracious and full of compassion. This is the grand discovery of all the searching, and therein lies the glory that is the conclusion of all. As in searching into any experiments in nature, there is an infinite pleasure that accompanies such a study to them that are

addicted thereunto; so to him that hath pleasure in the works of God, and is addicted to spy out his kindness in them, there is nothing so pleasant as the discovery of new circumstances of mercy that render his work *glorious and honourable*. Get, therefore, skill in his dealings with thee, and study thy friend's carriage to thee. It is the end why he raised thee up, and admitted thee into friendship with him, to show his art of love and friendship to thee; to show, in a word, how well he could love thee.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

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Verse 3. *His work is honourable and glorious.* The first thing that we notice is, that whereas the preceding verse spoke of the Lord's "works" in the plural number, this speaks of his "work" in the singular number; it would seem as if the psalmist, from the contemplation of the works of the Lord in general, was, as it were, irresistibly drawn away to the study of one work in particular; his mind and whole attention, so to speak, absorbed in that one work: a work so preeminently glorious and divine, that it eclipses, at least in his eyes, all the other works, although he has just said of them that they are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. "*The works of the Lord are great. His work is honourable and glorious.*" My next remark is, that the words used in the original are different, and as the former more strictly signifies makings, or things made, so the word in this verse more properly imports a doing or a thing done, and this, perhaps, is not without its significance. It leads me to the inference, that from the contemplation of the great works of creation, God's makings, wonderful, and interesting, and useful as they are, the spiritual mind of God's servant rapidly passes to some greater deed which the Lord hath done, some more marvellous act which he has accomplished, and which he designates as an honourable and a glorious deed. Now, since I consider that he spoke before of Christ, as the visible and immediate agent in creation, without whom was not anything made that was made, can we hesitate long as to this greater work, the rather as to it is immediately subjoined the suggestive sentence, *And his righteousness endureth for ever*. Is not this doing, the making an end of sin, and the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness? Is it not the great mystery, in which, as in creation, though the Eternal Father is the Fountain source, the Original Contriver, He, the coeternal Son, is the Doer, the Worker? Is it not, in short, *salvation*, the all absorbing subject of God's people's wonder, love, and praise?—*James H. Vidal, in "Jesus, God and Man," 1863.*

Verse 4. *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.* The memorials of the Divine benefits are always valued greatly by a grateful heart, as making present with us the things which transpired

ages before: such under the Old Testament was the sacrament of the paschal Lamb; but now the sacred Supper under the New Testament. Therefore, whatever recalls the Divine works to the *memory*, e.g. the ministry of the church, also the Sacred Scriptures, are worthy of the highest reverence.—*Martin Geier*.

Verse 4. The sweet spices of divine works must be beaten to powder by meditation, and then laid up in the cabinet of our memories. Therefore, says the psalmist here, *God hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*; he gives us the jewels of deliverance, not (because of the commonness of them) to wear them on our shoes, as the Romans did their pearls; much less to tread them under our feet; but rather to tie them as a chain about our necks. The impression of God's marvellous acts upon us must not be like that which the stone makes in the water, raising circles, beating one wave on another, and for a time making a noise, but soon after it sinks down, and the water returneth to its former smoothness; and so we, while judgment is fresh, are apt to publish it from man to man, but soon after we let it sink into the depth of oblivion, and we return to our old sins.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 4. *Made his wonderful works to be remembered.* The most amazing perverseness in man is proven by the fact that he does not remember what God has so arranged that it would seem impossible that it should be forgotten.—*William S. Plumer*.

Verse 4.

For wonderful indeed are all his works,
Pleasant to know and worthiest to be all
Had in remembrance always with delight.

—*John Milton*.

Verse 5. The first hemistich is the consequence of what is stated in the second, *i.e.*, *because* God remembered his covenant, *therefore* he gave food to them who fear him.—*George Phillips*.

Verse 5. *He hath given meat*, etc. The *meat* here mentioned is supposed to respect the paschal lamb, when they were to remember the works of God.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 5. *Meat*. Literally, *booty* or *spoil*: the spoil (Ex 12:36) brought by Israel out of Egypt, as God had engaged by *covenant* to Abraham, Ge 15:14, *They shall come out with great substance* (Kimchi). Rather the *manna* and *quails*, which to the hungry people were like a booty thrown in their way. The word is used for "*meat*" in general, in Pr 31:15; Mal 3:10.—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 5. *He hath given meat*. I rather choose to render it *portion*, in which sense it is taken in Pr 30:8 31:15; as if he should say, that God has given his people all that was needful, and that, considered as a portion, it was large and liberal; for we know that the people of Israel were enriched, not in consequence of their own industry, but by the blessing of God, who, like the father of a family, bestows upon his household everything necessary for their subsistence. In the following clause of the verse, he assigns as the reason for his care and kindness his desire of effectually demonstrating that

his covenant was not null and void.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5. *He will ever be mindful of his covenant.* This clause would seem to be introduced parenthetically—a passing thought, a happy thought, presenting itself spontaneously to the psalmist's mind, and immediately expressed with his lips. It will be observed it is in the future tense, while all the other clauses are in the past—"*He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*"; "*He hath given meat unto them that fear him*"; "*He will ever be mindful of his covenant*"; not *he hath ever been*. Dwelling on these past favours of God to Israel, it is his joy to think that they were but partial fulfilments of a covenant promise, which still remained, and in its highest sense should remain for ever; and that covenant itself the memorial or type of the better, the spiritual covenant, the gospel. So out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh, and he celebrates God's promised truth to Israel as the memorial and pledge of his eternal faithfulness to the New Testament Israel, his blood ransomed church.—*James H. Vidal.*

Verse 6. *He hath shewed his people,* etc. The Prophet indicates the unbelief of the Jews, who murmured against God in the desert, as if he could not enable them to enter into the promised land, and possess it, because the cities were walled, and the inhabitants strong, and giants dwelt in it. *He shewed,* he says, *i.e.,* he placed before their eyes, *the power of His works,* when he gave the lands of the heathen to be inhabited by his own people.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 6. *He hath shewed his people the power of his works.* So he hath showed his works of power to his people in Gospel times, as the miracles of Christ, his resurrection from the dead, redemption by him, and the work of grace on the hearts of men in all ages.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6. *He hath shewed his people,* etc. To them it is given to see, but not to others who are delivered up to a judicial blindness. *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.* Jer 33:3.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6. *To give them the heritage of the heathen.* The heathen themselves are bequeathed to God's people, and they must take possession of this inheritance to draw them to themselves.]—*Richter, in Zange's Commentary.*

Verse 7. The works of God expound his word, in his works his word is often made visible. That's an excellent expression, *The works of his hands are verity and judgment. The acts of God are verity,* that is, God acts his own truths. As the works of our hands ought to be the verity and judgments of God, (every action of a Christian ought to be one of Christ's truths), so it is with God himself; the works of his hands are his own verity and judgments. When we cannot find the meaning of God in his word, we may find it in his works: his works are a comment, an infallible comment upon his word.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 7-8. God is known to be faithful and just both in his works and in his word, insomuch that the most beautiful harmony is apparent between the things he has spoken and those he has done. This

wonderfully confirms the hope and faith of the godly.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 8. *They stand fast for ever and ever. Mykwmo, semuchim, they are propped up, buttressed for ever.* They can never fail; for God's power supports his works, and his providence preserves the record of what he has done.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 8. *They stand fast, are established, for ever and ever, etc.* This verse seems to have reference to the works of God mentioned in the former. His doings were not the demand of an occasion, they were in unison with a great and extensive purpose, with respect to the people of Israel and the Messiah. Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law of his mouth, till all be fulfilled.—*W. Wilson*.

Verse 8. *They are done in truth.* It is impossible that any better way should be directed, than that which the Lord useth in the disposal of all things here below, for all the works of the Lord are done in truth. As the word of God is a word of truth, so all his works are works of truth; for his works are nothing else but the making good of his word, and they are answerable to a threefold word of his. First, to his word of *prophecy*. Whatsoever changes God makes in the world, they hit some word of prophecy. Secondly, the works of God are answerable to his word of *threatening*. God threatens before he smites, and he never smote any man with a rod or sword, but according to his threatening. Thirdly, the works of God are answerable to his word of *promise*. All mercies are promised, and every work of mercy is the fulfilling of some promise. Now seeing all the works of God are reducible, either to prophecies, threatenings, or promises; they "*are done in truth*"; and what can be better done than that which is done in truth? The Jewish doctors observe, that the word *emeth* here used for truth, consists of *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, *mem*, the middle letter thereof, and *tau*, the last; to shew, that as God is *alpha* and *omega*, so the truth of God is the all in all of our comfort. Grace and truth by Christ is the sum of all the good news in the world.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 8. *Are done.* Ps 111:7-8 contains a precious meaning for the soul whose rest is in the finished work of Christ. Jehovah has commanded, giving it in trust to Jesus to make sure, in perfect obedience, the word of truth and holiness. The commandment therefore has been "*done*." It has been done *in truth and uprightness* by him whose meat it was to do it; who willingly received it with a knowledge of its end, and in whose accomplishment of it the believing sinner finds his assurance of eternal peace. Joh 12:50. Jesus held the law within his heart, to keep it there for ever. As the fulfiller in truth of the commandment, he has become its end for righteousness to every believer in his name.—*Arthur Pridham*.

Verse 9. *He sent redemption to his people.* Once out of Egypt, ever out of Satan's thraldom.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 9. *Sent redemption...commanded his covenant.* The deliverance was the more thankworthy, as being upon a covenant account: for thus every mercy is a token of the Lord's favour to his favourite: it is this which makes common mercies to become special mercies. Carnal men, so that

they enjoy mercies, they mind not which way they come in, so as they can but have them; but a child of God knows that everything that comes through the Redeemer's hands and by his covenant is the better for it, and tastes the sweeter by far.—*William Cooper, in the Morning Exercises.*

Verse 10 (*first clause*). In this passage *fear* is not to be understood as referring to the first or elementary principles of piety, as in 1Jo 4:18, but is comprehensive of all true godliness, or the worship of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*, etc. The text shows us the first step to true wisdom, and the test of common sense. It is so frequently repeated, that it may pass for a Scripture maxim, and we may be sure it is of singular importance. Job starts the question, "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" He searches nature through, in quest of it, but cannot find it: he cannot purchase it with the gold of Ophir, and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive instruction of God to man, and there he finds it: *To man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job 28:28. Solomon, the wisest of men, begins his Proverbs with this maxim, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*, Pr 1:7. And he repeats it again: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy*, (the knowledge of those that may be called *saints* with a sneer), *is understanding*, Pr 9:10. "*The fear of the LORD*" in Scripture signifies not only that pious passion or filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse by *doing his commandments*. The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of Christianity; in short, all that holiness of heart and life which is necessary to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. So that the sense of the text is this: To practise religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlasting happiness, is *wisdom*, true wisdom, the *beginning* of wisdom, the first step towards it: unless you begin here you can never attain it; all your wisdom without this does not deserve the name; it is madness and nonsense. *To do his commandments* is the best test of a *good understanding*: a *good sound understanding* have *all they* that do this, *all* of them without exception: however weak some of them may be in other things, they are wise in the most important respect; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have lost their understandings; they contradict common sense; they are beside themselves. In short, to pursue everlasting happiness as the end, in the way of holiness as the mean, this is "*wisdom*", "this is common sense, and there can be none without this.—*Samuel Davies, A.M. (1724-1761), President of Princeton College, New Jersey.*

Verse 10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* Now, then, I demand of the worldling what is the most high and deep point of wisdom? Is it to get an opulent fortune, to be so *wise as fifty thousand pounds*? Behold, *godliness is great gain*, saith Paul, and the Christian only rich, quoth the renowned catechist *Clement* of Alexandria. Is it to live joyfully, (or to use the gallant's phrase)

jovially? Behold, there is joyful gladness for such as are true hearted, Ps 97:11. A wicked man in his mad merry humour for a while may be *Pomponius Laetus*, but a good man only is *Hilarius*; only he which is faithful in heart is joyful in heart. Is it to get honour? *the praise of God's fear* (saith our text) *endures for ever*. Many worthies of the world are most unhappy, because they be commended where they be not, and tormented where they be; hell rings of their pains, earth of their praise; but *blessed is the man that feareth the Lord* (Ps 112:1), for his commendation is both here lasting, and hereafter everlasting; in this world he is renowned among men, in the next he shall be rewarded amongst saints and angels in the kingdom of glory.—*John Boys*.

Verse 10. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* It is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the middle and the end. It is indeed the Alpha and Omega, the essence, the body and the soul, the sum and substance. He that hath the fear of God is truly wise...It is surely wisdom to love that which is most lovable, and to occupy our hearts with that which is most worthy of our attachment, and the most capable of satisfying us.—*From the French of Daniel de Superville, 1700.*

Verse 10 (first clause). Fear is not all then; no, for it is but the beginning. God will have us begin, but not end there. We have begun with *qui timet Eum, who fears him*; we must end with *et operatar justitiam, and does justice*, and then comes *acceptus est Illi*, and not before. For neither fear, if it be fear alone; nor faith, if it be faith alone, is accepted of Him. If it be true fear, if such as God will accept, it is not *timor piger*, "a dull lazy fear"; his fear that feared his lord and *went and digged his talent into the ground*, and did nothing with it. Away with his fear and him *into outer darkness*.—*Lancelot Andrewes*.

Verse 10. Can it then be said that the nonreligious world is without wisdom? Has it no Aristotle, no Socrates, no Tacitus, no Goethe, no Gibbon? Let us understand what wisdom is. It is not any mere amount of knowledge that constitutes wisdom. Appropriate knowledge is essential to wisdom. A man who has not the knowledge appropriate to his position, who does not know himself in his relation to God and to his fellowmen, who is misinformed as to his duties, his dangers, his necessities, though he may have written innumerable works of a most exalted character, yet is he to be set down as a man without wisdom. What is it to you that your servant is acquainted with mathematics, if he is ignorant of your will, and of the way to do it? The genius of a Voltaire, a Spinoza, a Byron, only makes their folly the more striking. As though a man floating rapidly onwards to the falls of Niagara, should occupy himself in drawing a very admirable picture of the scenery. Men who are exceedingly great in the world's estimation have made the most signal blunders with regard to the most important things; and it is only because these things are not considered important by the world, that the reputation of these men remains. If you have learned to estimate things in some measure as God estimates them, to desire what he offers, to relinquish what he forbids, and to recognize the duties that he has appointed you, you are in the path of wisdom, and the great men we have been speaking about are

far behind you—far from the narrow gate which you have entered. He only is wise, who can call Christ the wisdom of God.—*George Bowen*.

Verse 10. *The beginning of wisdom.* That is, the principle whence it springs, and the fountain from which it flows.—*William Walford*.

Verse 10. As there are degrees of wisdom, so of the fear of the Lord; but there is no degree of this fear so inferior or low, but it is a beginning, at least, of wisdom; and there is no degree of wisdom so high or perfect, but it hath its root in, or beginning, from this fear.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 10. *Beginning of wisdom.* The word translated *beginning* is of uncertain sense. It may signify the *first* in *time* only, and so the rudiments, first foundation, or groundwork, and so though the most necessary, yet the most imperfect part of the work. And if it should thus be understood here and in other places, the sense would be no more but this, that there were no true *wisdom*, which had not its foundation in piety and fear of God. But the word signifies the *first* in *dignity* as well as in order or time, and is frequently used for the chief or principal of any kind...And thus it is to be understood here, that *the fear of the Lord* (which signifies all piety) *is the principal or chief of wisdom*, as *sapientia prima* in Horace is the *principal* or most excellent wisdom; according to that of Job 28:28: *Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding, that, by way of eminence, the most excellent wisdom and understanding.*—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 10. *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* They which *do* the commandments have a good understanding; not they which speak of the commandments, nor they which write of the commandments, nor they which preach of the commandments, but they which *do* the commandments, have a good understanding. The rest have a false understanding, a vain understanding, an understanding like that of the scribes and pharisees, which was enough to condemn them, but not to save them.—*Henry Smith*.

Verse 10. *A good understanding have all they that do,* etc. So much a man knoweth in true account, as he doth; hence understanding is here ascribed to the will; so Job 28:28. Some render it good success.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 10 (last clause). The praise of it endures for ever; or as other translations, *his praise*; referring it either to God, or else to the man who fears God. Some divines ascribe this praise to God alone, because *tehilla* properly signifieth only that kind of praise which is due to God; and so they make this clause to contain both a precept and a promise. *Precept*, exhorting us to praise God with all our heart, both in the secret assemblies of the faithful and in the public congregation. And lest any man in executing this office should be discouraged, the prophet addeth a promise, "*God's praise doth endure for ever*"; as if he should have said, "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; the Lord is God, albeit the Gentiles furiously rage together, and the Jews imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers combine themselves against him, "Ps 99:1 18:31 2:1. He that

dwelleth in heaven hath all his enemies in derision, and makes them all his footstool; his power is for ever, and so consequently his praise shall endure for ever; in the militant church, unto the world's end; in the triumphant, world without end. Most interpreters have referred this unto the good man who fears the Lord, yet diversely. S. Augustine expounds it thus, "*his praise*," that is, his praising of the Lord, "*shall endure for ever*," because he shall be one of them of whom it is said (Ps 84:4) *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee*. Others understand by "*his praise*" the commendation of the good man, both in the life present and in that which is to come, for his righteousness shall be had in an everlasting remembrance. Ps 112:6—*John Boys*.

Verse 10 (second clause). Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments: not to talk them, but to do them; and such *have a good understanding*, i.e., First, They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God. Secondly, They understand well.

1. It is a sign they do understand well: the most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent. They are wise that make God's law their rule, and are in everything ruled by it.

2. It is the way to understand better. "*A good understanding are they to all that do them*"; i.e., the fear of the Lord, and the laws of God give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation.—*Condensed from Matthew Henry*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. *Praise ye the Lord*; there is an exhortation. "*I will praise the Lord*"; there is a vow. It shall be "*with my whole heart*"; there is experimental godliness. It shall be "*in the assembly of the upright*"; there is a relative position occupied along with the family of God.—*Joseph Irons*.

Verse 1. *With my whole heart*. This includes spirituality, simplicity, and earnestness.—*Joseph Irons*.

Verse 1.

1. Who are the upright?
2. What are they doing? Praising God.
3. What shall I do if I am favoured to stand among them? "I will praise the Lord."

Verse 1. Where I love to be, and what I love to do.

Verse 2. The Christian philosopher.

1. His sphere: "The works of the Lord."
2. His work: "Sought out."
3. His qualification: "Pleasure therein."
4. His conclusion: "Praise, "as in Ps 111:1.

Verses 2-9. The psalmist furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God.

1. The greatness of his works and the glory of them.

2. The righteousness of them.
3. The goodness of them.
4. The power of them.
5. The conformity of them to his word of promise.
6. The perpetuity of them.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 3 (last clause). As an essential attribute, as revealed in providence, as vindicated in redemption, as demonstrated in punishment, as appropriated by believers.

Verse 4. The compassion of the Lord as seen in aiding the memories of his people.

Verses 4-5. God's marvels ought not to be nine day wonders.

1. *It is God's design that his wonders should be remembered, therefore,*

- (a) He made them great.
- (b) He wrought them for an undeserving people.
- (c) He wrought them at memorable times.
- (d) He put them on record.
- (e) He instituted memorials.
- (f) He bade them tell their children.
- (g) He so dealt with them as to refresh their memories.

2. It is our wisdom to remember the Lord's wonders.

- a. To assure us of his compassion: "The Lord is gracious."
- b. To make us consider his bounty: "he hath given meat."
- c. To certify us of his faithfulness: "he will ever be mindful of his covenant."
- d. To arouse our praise: "Praise ye the Lord."

Verse 5. There is,

1. Encouragement from the past: "He hath given meat," etc.
2. Confidence for the future: "He will ever be mindful," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 6. The power of God an encouragement for the evangelization of the heathen.

Verse 9. *Redemption.* Praise our Triune Jehovah for his redemption. Write it down where you may read it. Affix it where you may see it. Engrave it on your heart that you may understand it. It is a word big with importance. In it is enfolded your destinies and those of the Church, to all future ages. There are heights in it you never can have scaled, and depths you never can have fathomed. You have never taken the wings of the morning, and gained the utmost parts of earth, to measure the length and breadth of it. Wear it as a seal on your arm, as a signet on your right hand, for Jesus is the author of it. O! prize it as a precious stone, more precious than rubies...Let it express your best hopes while living, and dwell on your trembling lips in the moment of dissolution; for it shall form the chorus of the song of the redeemed throughout eternity.—*Isaac Saunders, 1818.*

Verse 9. *He hath commanded his covenant for ever. As he covenanted, so he looketh that his covenants should be respected, which are as binding to us, as his covenant is to him; and, through grace, his covenant is as binding to him, as those are to us.—John Trapp.*

Verse 9. *Holy and reverend, or, terrible, is his name. "Holy is his name, "and therefore "terrible" to those who, under all the means of grace, continue unholy.—George Horne.*

Verse 9. *Holy and reverend is his name. Which therefore we should not presume on a sudden to blurt out. The Jews would not pronounce it. The Grecians (as Suidas observeth), when they would swear by their Jupiter, forbore to mention him. This should act as a check to the profaneness common amongst us. Let those that would have their *name reverend*, labour to be *holy* as God is holy.—John Trapp.*

Verse 9. *Redemption.* Conceived, arranged, executed, and applied by God. By price and by power. From sin and death. That we may be free, the Lord's own, the Lord's glory.

Verse 9. Redemption.

1. Its author: "He sent."
2. Its objects: "Unto his people."
3. The pledge it gives us: "He hath commanded his covenant, "etc.
4. The praise it creates in us.

Verse 9. *Holy and reverend.*

1. The holiness of God the object of our reverence.
2. Such reverence has much useful influence over us.
3. It should always accompany our faith in redemption and covenant. See preceding clauses of verse.

Verse 10.

1. The beginner in Christ's school.
2. The man who has taken a degree: "a good understanding, " etc.
3. The Master who receives the praise.

Verse 10.

1. The beginning of wisdom: "The fear of the Lord"—God is feared.
2. Its continuance: "a good understanding have all they that do his commandments"—when the fear of the Lord in the heart is developed in the life.
3. Its end, praising God for ever: "his praise, "etc.—*G. R.*

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH PSALM

In the Works of John Boys, 1626, folio, pp. 841-845, there is a short exposition of this psalm.

Jesus God and Man; an Exposition of Psalms 111 and 112. By the Rev. James H. Vidal, M.A., Vicar

of Chiddingley, Sussex. London: 1863 12mo.

Psalm 112

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. There is no title to this psalm, but it is evidently a companion to the hundred and eleventh, and, like it, it is an alphabetical psalm. Even in the number of verses, and clauses of each verse, it coincides with its predecessor, as also in many of its words and phrases. The reader should carefully compare the two psalms line by line. The subject of the poem before us is—*the blessedness of the righteous man*, and so it bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts. The hundred and eleventh speaks of the great Father, and this describes his children renewed after his image. The psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with "Praise ye the Lord; "and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God.

DIVISION. The subject is stated in the first verse, and enlarged upon under several heads from 2 to 9. The blessedness of the righteousness is set forth by contrast with the fate of the ungodly in verse 10.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD.* This exhortation is never given too often; the Lord always deserves praise, we ought always to render it, we are frequently forgetful of it, and it is always well to be stirred up to it. The exhortation is addressed to all thoughtful persons who observe the way and manner of life of men that fear the Lord. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, the Lord should have all the glory of it, for we are his workmanship. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. According to the last verse of Psalm 111, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; this man, therefore, has begun to be wise, and wisdom has brought him present happiness, and secured him eternal felicity. Jehovah is so great that he is to be feared and had in reverence of all them that are round about him, and he is at the same time so infinitely good that the fear is sweetened into filial love, and becomes a delightful emotion, by no means engendering bondage. There is a slavish fear which is accursed; but that

godly fear which leads to delight in the service of God is infinitely blessed. Jehovah is to be praised both for inspiring men with godly fear and for the blessedness which they enjoy in consequence thereof. We ought to bless God for blessing any man, and especially for setting the seal of his approbation upon the godly. His favour towards the God fearing displays his character and encourages gracious feelings in others, therefore let him be praised. That delighteth greatly in his commandments. The man not only studies the divine precepts and endeavours to observe them, but rejoices to do so: holiness is his happiness, devotion is his delight, truth is his treasure. He rejoices in the precepts of godliness, yea, and delights greatly in them. We have known hypocrites rejoice in the doctrines, but never in the commandments. Ungodly men may in some measure obey the commandments out of fear, but only a gracious man will observe them with delight. Cheerful obedience is the only acceptable obedience; he who obeys reluctantly is disobedient at heart, but he who takes pleasure in the command is truly loyal. If through divine grace we find ourselves described in these two sentences, let us give all the praise to God, for he hath wrought all our works in us, and the dispositions out of which they spring. Let self righteous men praise themselves, but he who has been made righteous by grace renders all the praise to the Lord.

Verse 2. *His seed shall be mighty upon earth*, that is to say, successive generations of God fearing men shall be strong and influential in society, and in the latter days they shall have dominion. The true seed of the righteous are those who follow them in their virtues, even as believers are the seed of Abraham, because they imitate his faith; and these are the real heroes of their era, the truly great men among the sons of Adam; their lives are sublime, and their power upon their age is far greater than at first sight appears. If the promise must be regarded as alluding to natural seed, it must be understood as a general statement rather than a promise made to every individual, for the children of the godly are not all prosperous, nor all famous. Nevertheless, he who fears God, and leads a holy life, is, as a rule, doing the best he can for the future advancement of his house; no inheritance is equal to that of an unblemished name, no legacy can excel the benediction of a saint; and, taking matters for all in all, the children of the righteous man commence life with greater advantages than others, and are more likely to succeed in it, in the best and highest sense. The generation of the upright shall be blessed. The race of sincere, devout, righteous men, is kept up from age to age, and ever abides under the blessing of God. The godly may be persecuted, but they shall not be forsaken; the curses of men cannot deprive them of the blessing of God, for the words of Balaam are true, "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." Their children also are under the special care of heaven, and as a rule it shall be found that they inherit the divine blessing. Honesty and integrity are better cornerstones for an honourable house than mere cunning and avarice, or even talent and push. To fear God and to walk uprightly is a higher nobility than blood or birth can bestow.

Verse 3. *Wealth and riches shall be in his house.* Understood literally this is rather a promise of the

old covenant than of the new, for many of the best of the people of God are very poor; yet it has been found true that uprightness is the road to success, and, all other things being equal, the honest man is the rising man. Many are kept poor through knavery and profligacy; but godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. If we understand the passage spiritually it is abundantly true. What wealth can equal that of the love of God? What riches can rival a contented heart? It matters nothing that the roof is thatched, and the floor is of cold stone: the heart which is cheered with the favour of heaven is "rich to all the intents of bliss." And his righteousness endureth for ever. Often when gold comes in the gospel goes out; but it is not so with the blessed man. Prosperity does not destroy the holiness of his life, or the humility of his heart. His character stands the test of examination, overcomes the temptations of wealth, survives the assaults of slander, outlives the afflictions of time, and endures the trial of the last great day. The righteousness of a true saint endureth for ever, because it springs from the same root as the righteousness of God, and is, indeed, the reflection of it. So long as the Lord abideth righteous he will maintain by his grace the righteousness of his people. They shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger. There is also another righteousness which belongs to the Lord's chosen, which is sure to endure for ever, namely, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which is called "everlasting righteousness," "belonging as it does to the Son of God himself, who is "the Lord our righteousness."

Verse 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.* He does not lean to injustice in order to ease himself, but like a pillar stands erect, and he shall be found so standing when the ungodly, who are as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, shall lie in ruins. He will have his days of darkness, he may be sick and sorry, poor and pining, as well as others; his former riches may take to themselves wings and fly away, while even his righteousness may be cruelly suspected; thus the clouds may lower around him, but his gloom shall not last for ever, the Lord will bring him light in due season, for as surely as a good man's sun goes down it shall rise again. If the darkness be caused by depression of spirit, the Holy Ghost will comfort him; if by pecuniary loss or personal bereavement, the presence of Christ shall be his solace; and if by the cruelty and malignity of men, the sympathy of his Lord shall be his support. It is as ordinary for the righteous to be comforted as for the day to dawn. Wait for the light and it will surely come; for even if our heavenly Father should in our last hours put us to bed in the dark, we shall find it morning when we awake. He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. This is spoken of God in the fourth verse of the hundred and eleventh Psalm, and now the same words are used of his servant: thus we are taught that when God makes a man upright, he makes him like himself. We are at best but humble copies of the great original; still we are copies, and because we are so we praise the Lord, who hath created us anew in Christ Jesus. The upright man is "*gracious*," that is, full of kindness to all around him; he is not sour and churlish, but he is courteous to friends, kind to the needy, forgiving to the erring, and earnest for the good of all. He is

also "*full of compassion*"; that is to say, he tenderly feels for others, pities them, and as far as he can assists them in their time of trouble. He does not need to be driven to benevolence, he is brimful of humanity; it is his joy to sympathize with the sorrowing. He is also said to be "*righteous*": in all his transactions with his fellow men he obeys the dictates of right, and none can say that he goes beyond or defrauds his neighbour. His justice is, however, tempered with compassion, and seasoned with graciousness. Such men are to be found in our churches, and they are by no means so rare as the censorious imagine; but at the same time they are far scarcer than the breadth of profession might lead us to hope. Lord, make us all to possess these admirable qualities.

Verse 5. *A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth.* Having passed beyond stern integrity into open handed benevolence he looks kindly upon all around him, and finding himself in circumstances which enable him to spare a little of his wealth he lends judiciously where a loan will be of permanent service. Providence has made him able to lend, and grace makes him willing to lend. He is not a borrower, for God has lifted him above that necessity; neither is he a hoarder, for his new nature saves him from that temptation; but he wisely uses the talents committed to him. He will guide his affairs with discretion. Those who neglect their worldly business must not plead religion as an excuse, for when a man is truly upright he exercises great care in managing his accounts, in order that he may remain so. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between indiscretion and dishonesty; carelessness in business may become almost as great an evil to others as actual knavery; a good man should not only be upright, but he should be so discreet that no one may have the slightest reason to suspect him of being otherwise. When the righteous man lends he exercises prudence, not risking his all, for fear he should not be able to lend again, and not lending so very little that the loan is of no service. He drives his affairs, and does not allow them to drive him; his accounts are straight and clear, his plans are wisely laid, and his modes of operation carefully selected. He is prudent, thrifty, economical, sensible, judicious, discreet. Men call him a fool for his religion, but they do not find him so when they come to deal with him. "The beginning of wisdom" has made him wise, the guidance of heaven has taught him to guide his affairs, and with half an eye one can see that he is a man of sound sense. Such persons greatly commend godliness. Alas, some professedly good men act as if they had taken leave of their senses; this is not religion, but stupidity. True religion is sanctified common sense. Attention to the things of heaven does not necessitate the neglect of the affairs of earth; on the contrary, he who has learned how to transact business with God ought to be best able to do business with men. The children of this world often are in their generation wiser than the children of light, but there is no reason why this proverb should continue to be true.

Verse 6. *Surely he shall not be moved for ever.* God has rooted and established him so that neither men nor devils shall sweep him from his place. His prosperity shall be permanent, and not like that of the gambler and the cheat, whose gains are evanescent: his reputation shall be bright and lustrous

from year to year, for it is not a mere pretence; his home shall be permanent, and he shall not need to wander from place to place as a bird that wanders from her nest; and even his memory shall be abiding, for a good man is not soon forgotten, and the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. They are of a most ancient family, and not mushrooms of an hour, and their grand old stock shall be found flourishing when all the proud houses of ungodly men shall have faded into nothing. The righteous are worth remembering, their actions are of the kind which record themselves, and God himself takes charge of their memorials. None of us likes the idea of being forgotten, and yet the only way to avoid it is to be righteous before God.

Verse 7. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.* He shall have no dread that evil tidings will come, and he shall not be alarmed when they do come. Rumours and reports he despises; prophecies of evil, vented by fanatical mouths, he ridicules; actual and verified information of loss and distress he bears with equanimity, resigning everything into the hands of God. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is neither fickle nor cowardly; when he is undecided as to his course he is still fixed in heart: he may change his plan, but not the purpose of his soul. His heart being fixed in solid reliance upon God, a change in his circumstances but slightly affects him; faith has made him firm and steadfast, and therefore if the worst should come to the worst, he would remain quiet and patient, waiting for the salvation of God.

Verse 8. *His heart is established.* His love to God is deep and true, his confidence in God is firm and unmoved; his courage has a firm foundation, and is supported by Omnipotence. He has become settled by experience, and confirmed by years. He is not a rolling stone, but a pillar in the house of the Lord. He shall not be afraid. He is ready to face any adversary—a holy heart gives a brave face. Until he see his desire upon his enemies. All through the conflict, even till he seizes the victory, he is devoid of fear. When the battle wavers, and the result seems doubtful, he nevertheless believes in God, and is a stranger to dismay. Grace makes him desire his enemies' good: though nature leads him to wish to see justice done to his cause, he does not desire for those who injure him anything by way of private revenge.

Verse 9. *He hath dispersed, he hath given, to the poor.* What he received, he distributed; and distributed to those who most needed it. He was God's reservoir, and forth from his abundance flowed streams of liberality to supply the needy. If this be one of the marks of a man who feareth the Lord, there are some who are strangely destitute of it. They are great at gathering, but very slow at dispersing; they enjoy the blessedness of receiving, but seldom taste the greater joy of giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—perhaps they think that the blessing of receiving is enough for them. His righteousness endureth for ever. His liberality has salted his righteousness, proved its reality, and secured its perpetuity. This is the second time that we have this remarkable sentence applied to the godly man, and it must be understood as resulting from the enduring mercy of the Lord.

The character of a righteous man is not spasmodic, he is not generous by fits and starts, nor upright in a few points only; his life is the result of principle, his actions flow from settled, sure, and fixed convictions, and therefore his integrity is maintained when others fail. He is not turned about by companions, nor affected by the customs of society; he is resolute, determined, and immovable. His horn shall be exalted with honour. God shall honour him, the universe of holy beings shall honour him, and even the wicked shall feel an unconscious reverence of him. Let it be observed, in summing up the qualities of the God fearing man, that he is described not merely as righteous, but as one bearing the character to which Paul refers in the memorable verse, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Kindness, benevolence, and generosity, are essential to the perfect character; to be strictly just is not enough, for God is love, and we must love our neighbour as ourselves: to give every one his due is not sufficient, we must act upon those same principles of grace which reign in the heart of God. The promises of establishment and prosperity are not to churlish Nabals, nor to niggard Labans, but to bountiful souls who have proved their fitness to be stewards of the Lord by the right way in which they use their substance.

Verse 10. The tenth and last verse sets forth very forcibly the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, thus making the blessedness of the godly appear all the more remarkable. Usually we see Ebal and Gerizim, the blessing and the curse, set the one over against the other, to invest both with the greater solemnity. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. The ungodly shall first see the example of the saints to their own condemnation, and shall at last behold the happiness of the godly and to the increase of their eternal misery. The child of wrath shall be obliged to witness the blessedness of the righteous, though the sight shall make him gnaw his own heart. He shall fret and fume, lament and wax angry, but he shall not be able to prevent it, for God's blessing is sure and effectual. He shall gnash with his teeth. Being very wrathful, and exceedingly envious, he would fain grind the righteous between his teeth; but as he cannot do that, he grinds his teeth against each other.

And melt away. The heat of his passion shall melt him like wax, and the sun of God's providence shall dissolve him like snow, and at the last the fire of divine vengeance shall consume him as the fat of rams. How horrible must that life be which like the snail melts as it proceeds, leaving a slimy trail behind. Those who are grieved at goodness deserve to be worn away by such an abominable sorrow. The desire of the wicked shall perish. He shall not achieve his purpose, he shall die a disappointed man. By wickedness he hoped to accomplish his purpose—that very wickedness shall be his defeat. While the righteous shall endure for ever, and their memory shall be always green; the ungodly man and his name shall rot from off the face of the earth. He desired to be the founder of a family, and to be remembered as some great one: he shall pass away and his name shall die with him. How wide is the gulf which separates the righteous from the wicked, and how different are the

portions which the Lord deals out to them. O for grace to be blessed of the Lord! This will make us praise him with our whole heart.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The hundred and eleventh and the hundred and twelfth psalms, two very short poems, dating apparently from the latest age of inspired psalmody, present such features of resemblance as to leave no doubt that they came from the same pen. In structure they are identical; and this superficial resemblance is designed to call attention to something deeper and more important. The subject of the one is the exact counterpart of the subject of the other. The first celebrates the character and works of God; the second, the character and felicity of the godly man.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm. Here are rehearsed the blessings which God is wont to bestow on the godly. And as in the previous Psalm the praises of God were directly celebrated, so in this Psalm they are indirectly declared by those gifts which are conspicuous in those who fear him.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm. This psalm is a banquet of heavenly wisdom; and as Basil speaketh of another part of Scripture, likening it to an apothecary's shop; so may this book of the psalms fitly be compared; in which are so many sundry sorts of medicines, that every man may have that which is convenient for his disease.—*T. S., 1621.*

Whole Psalm. The righteousness of the Mediator, I make no doubt, is celebrated in this psalm; for surely that alone is worthy to be extolled in songs of praise: especially since we are taught by the Holy Ghost to say, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." I conclude, therefore, that in this alphabetical psalm, for such is its construction, Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega."—*John Fry.*

Verse 1. This psalm is a praising of God for blessing the believer, and the whole Psalm doth prove that the believer is blessed: which proposition is set down in verse 1, and confirmed with as many reasons as there are verses following. Whence learn,

1. Albeit, in singing of certain psalms, or parts thereof, there be nothing directly spoken of the Lord, or to the Lord, yet he is praised when his truth is our song, or when his works and doctrine are our song; as here it is said, *Praise ye the Lord*, and then in the following verses the blessedness of the believer taketh up all the psalm.

2. It is the Lord's praise that his servants are the only blessed people in the world. *Praise ye the Lord.* Why? because *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*

3. He is not the blessed man who is most observant to catch opportunities to have pleasure, profit, and worldly preferment, and careth not how he cometh by them: but he is the blessed man who is most observant of God's will, and careful to follow it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.* It is not said simply, "Blessed is the man who fears": for there is a fear which of itself produces misery and wretchedness rather than happiness. It has to do, therefore, chiefly with what is feared. To fear when it is not becoming, and not to fear when fear is proper, these are not blessedness for a man, but misery and wretchedness. The prophet, therefore, says rightly, "Blessed is the man that feareth *the Lord*": and in the 7th and 8th verses he says of this blessed one that he shall not be afraid of evil tidings. Therefore, he who fears God and, according to the exhortation of Christ, does not fear those who can kill the body, he truly may be numbered among the blessed.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 1. *Feareth the Lord.* Filial fear is here intended. Whereby we are both restrained from evil, Pr 3:7; and incited unto well doing, Ec 12:13; and whereof God alone is the author, Jer 32:39-40; A duty required of every one, Ps 33:8; Early, 1Ki 18:12; Only, Lu 12:5; Continually, Pr 23:17; With confidence, Ps 115:11; With joyfulness, Ps 119:74; With thankfulness, Re 19:5.—*Thomas Wilson, in "A Complete Christian Dictionary," 1661.*

Verse 1. *That delighteth greatly in his commandments.* The Hebrew word Upx, *chaphets*, is rather emphatic, which is, as it were, *to take his pleasure*, and I have rendered it *to delight himself*. For the prophet makes a distinction between a willing and prompt endeavour to keep the law, and that which consists in mere servile and constrained obedience.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1. *That delighteth greatly in his commandments*—defining what constitutes the true "fear of the Lord," "which was termed "the beginning of wisdom," Ps 111:10. He who hath this true "fear" *delights* (Ps 111:2) not merely in the theory, but in the practice of all "the Lord's commandments." Such fear, so far from being a "hard" service, is the only "blessed" one (Jer 32:39). Compare the Gospel commandments, 1Jo 3:23-24 Ps 112:3. True obedience is not task work, as formalists regard religion, but a "delight" (Ps 1:2). Worldly delights, which made piety irksome, are supplanted by the newborn delight in and taste for the will and ways of God (Ps 19:7-10).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 1. *In his commandments.* When we cheerfully practice all that the Lord requireth of us, love sweetens all things, and it becomes our meat and drink to do his will. The thing commanded is excellent, but it is sweeter because commanded *by him*—"his commandments." A man is never thoroughly converted till he delighteth in God and his service, and his heart is overpowered by the sweetness of divine love. A slavish kind of religiousness, when we had rather not do than do our work, is no fruit of grace, and cannot evidence a sincere love.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 2. *His seed.* If any one should desire to leave behind him a flourishing posterity, let him not think to accomplish it by accumulating heaps of gold and silver, and leaving them behind him; but by rightly recognising God and serving Him; and commending his children to the guardianship and protection of God.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2. *The generation of the upright*—the family; the children—*shall be blessed.* Such promises

are expected to be fulfilled *in general*; it is not required by any proper rules of interpreting language that this should be universally and always true.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 2. *The generation of the upright shall be blessed.* Albeit, few do believe it, yet is it true, that upright dealing hath better fruits than witty projecting and cunning catching.—*David Dickson*.

Verses 2-3. It is probable that Lot thought of enriching his family when he chose the fertile plains of wicked Sodom, yet the event was very different; but Abraham "feared the Lord, and delighted greatly in his commandments, "and his descendants were "*mighty upon earth.*" And thus it will generally be, in every age, with the posterity of those who imitate the father of the faithful; and their disinterested and liberal conduct shall prove, in the event, a far preferable inheritance laid up for their children, than gold and silver, houses and lands, would have been.—*Thomas Scott*.

Verse 3. *Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever.* He is not the worse for his wealth, nor drawn aside by the deceitfulness of riches, which yet is hard and happy.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 3. In the lower sense, we may read these words literally of abundant wealth bestowed on the righteous by God, and used, not for pride and luxury, but for continual works of mercy, whence it is said of the person so enriched, that his righteousness endureth for ever. But the higher meaning bids us see here those true spiritual riches which are stored up for the poor in spirit, often most needy in the prosperity of the world; and we may come at the truest sense by comparing the words wherein the great apostle describes his own condition, "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2Co 6:10. For who can be richer than he who is heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ?—*Agellius, Chrysostom, and Didymus, in Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 3. *His righteousness endureth for ever.* It seems a bold thing to say this of anything human, and yet it is true; for all human righteousness has its root in the righteousness of God. It is not merely man striving to copy God. It is God's gift and God's work. There is a living connexion between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, and therefore the imperishableness of the one appertains to the other also. Hence the same thing is affirmed here of the human righteousness which in Ps 111:3 is affirmed of the Divine.—*J. J. S. Perowne*.

Verse 3. *His righteousness endureth for ever.* We are justified before God by faith only: Ro 3:4: but they are righteous before men, who live honestly, piously, humbly, as the law of God requires. Concerning this righteousness the Psalmist says that it endureth for ever, while the feigned and simulated uprightness of hypocrites is abominable before God, and with men speedily passes away.—*Solomon Gesner*.

Verse 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.* The arising of light out of darkness, although one of the most common, is one of the most beautiful, as it is one of the most beneficent natural phenomena. The sunrise is a daily victory of light over darkness. Every morning the darkness

flees away. Heavy sleepers in the city are not apt to be very well acquainted with the rising sun. They know the tender beauties of the dawning, and the glories of sunrise by poetical description, or by the word of others. The light has fully come, and the day has long begun its work, especially if it be summer time, before ordinary citizens are awake; and, unless on some rare occasions, the millions of men who, every day, see more or less the fading of the light into the dark, never see the rising of the light out of the dark again; and, perhaps, seldom or never think with what thankfulness and joy it is hailed by those who need it—by the sailor, tempest tossed all night, and driven too near the sandbank or the shore; by the benighted traveller lost in the wood, or in the wild, who knows not south from north until the sun shall rise; by the night watcher in the sick room, who hears, and weeps to hear, through the weary night, the moaning of that old refrain of sorrow, "Would God it were morning!" What intensity of sorrow, fear, hope, there may be in that expression, "more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning"! Now I make no doubt that there is at least somewhat of that more intense meaning carried up into the higher region of spiritual experience, and expressed by the text, "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." ...Sincerity: an honest desire to know the truth: readiness to make any sacrifice in order to the knowledge: obedience to the truth so far as it is known already—these will bring the light when nothing else will bring it.—*Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary and other Meditations," 1872.*

Verse 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.* The great lesson taught by this simile is the connection which obtains between integrity of purpose and clearness of perception, insomuch that a dutiful conformity to what is right, is generally followed up by a ready and luminous discernment of what is true. It tells us that if we have but grace to do as we ought, we shall be made to see as we ought. It is a lesson repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, and that in various places both of the Old and New Testament: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"; "The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them"; "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"; or still more specifically, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God."—*Thomas Chalmers, 1780-1847.*

Verse 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:* that is, comfort in affliction. He hath comforted others in affliction, and been light to them in their darkness, as is showed in the latter end of the fourth verse, and in the fifth, and therefore by way of gracious retaliation, the Lord will comfort him in his affliction, and command the light to rise upon him in his darkness.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4. *Light. Darkness.* While we are on earth, we are subject to a threefold "darkness"; the darkness of error, the darkness of sorrow, and the darkness of death. To dispel these, God visiteth us, by his Word, with a threefold "light"; the light of truth, the light of comfort, and the light of life.—*George Horne.*

Verse 4. *Gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous*—attributes usually applied to God, but here

said of *"the upright."* The children of God, knowing in their own experience that God our Father is *"gracious, full of compassion, and righteous,"* seek themselves to be the same towards their fellow-men from instinctive imitation of him (Mt 5:45,48; Eph 5:8; Lu 6:36).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 5. *A good man sheweth favour,* etc. Consider that power to do good is a dangerous ability, unless we use it. Remember that it is God who giveth wealth, and that he expects some answerable return of it. Live not in such an inhuman manner as if Nabal and Judas were come again into the world. Think frequently and warmly of the love of God and Jesus to you. You will not deny your crumbs to the miserable, when you thankfully call to mind that Christ gave for you his very flesh and blood. Consider as one great end of poverty is patience, so one great end of wealth is charity. Think how honourable it is to make a present to the great King of the world; and what a condescension it is in his all sufficiency to do that good by us, which he could so abundantly do without us.—*Thomas Tenison, 1636-1715.*

Verse 5. *Lendeth.* The original word here, hwl, *lavah,* means to join oneself to any one; to cleave to him; then to form the union which is constituted between debtor and creditor, borrower and lender. Here it is used in the latter sense, and it means that a good man will accommodate another—a neighbour—with money, or with articles to be used temporarily and returned again. A man who always borrows is not a desirable neighbour; but a man who never lends—who never is willing to accommodate—is a neighbour that no one would wish to live near—a crooked, perverse, bad man. True religion will always dispose a man to do acts of kindness in any and every way possible.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5. Charity though it springs in the heart should be guided by the head, that it may spread itself abroad to the best advantage. He will guide his affairs with discretion, and no affairs are so properly the good man's own as the dispensation and stewardship of those blessings which God has entrusted him with, for "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—*Michael Cox, 1748.*

Verse 5. *He will guide his affairs with discretion.* Just as a steward, servant, or agent in any secular concern has to feel that his mind is his master's, as well as his hands, and that his attention, thought, fact, and talent, should be vigorously and faithfully given to the interests of his employer; so the Christian stewardship of money, demands on the part of God's servant, in respect to every form of its use and disposal, the exercise of reflection; a reference to conscience; the recollection of responsibility to God; attention to the appeals of humanity as addressed to the ear of justice and love. Everything is to be weighed as in the balance of the sanctuary; a decision formed; and then energy, skill, schemes, and plans wisely constructed, prudential limitations or beneficent liberality as may seem best. Spending, saving, giving, or lending, all being done so as best to meet what may be felt to be the Master's will, and what may best evince at once the wisdom and the fidelity of his servant.—*Thomas Binney, in "Money: a Popular Exposition in Rough Notes," 1865.*

Verse 5. Discretion. There is a story, concerning divers ancient Fathers, that they came to St. Anthony, enquiring of him, what virtue did by a direct line lead to perfection, that so a man might shun the snares of Satan. He bade every one of them speak his opinion; one said, watching and sobriety; another said, fasting and discipline; a third said, humble prayer; a fourth said, poverty and obedience; and another, piety and works of mercy; but when every one had spoken his mind, his answer was, That all these were excellent graces indeed, but discretion was the chief of them all. And so beyond doubt it is; being the very *Auriga virtutum*, the guide of all virtuous and religious actions, the moderator and orderer of all the affections; for whatsoever is done with it is virtue, and what without it is vice. An ounce of discretion is said to be worth a pound of learning. As zeal without knowledge is blind, so knowledge without discretion is lame, like a sword in a madman's hand, able to do much, apt to do nothing. *Tolle hanc et virtus vitium erit.* He that will fast must fast with discretion, he must so mortify that he does not kill his flesh; he that gives alms to the poor, must do it with discretion, *Omnipotenti non omnia petenti*—to every one that doth ask, but not everything that he doth ask; so likewise pray with discretion, observing place and time; place, lest he be reputed a hypocrite; time, lest he be accounted a heretic. Thus it is that discretion is to be made the guide of all religious performances.—*Quoted by John Spencer, 1658.*

Verse 6. What doth the text say? The righteous (that is the bountiful) *shall be in everlasting remembrance.* God remembers our good deeds, when he rewards them (as he does our prayers, when he hears them). If to remember, then, be to reward, an everlasting reward is our everlasting remembrance... Now in those who are to be partakers of mercy, the divine wisdom requires this congruity, that they be such as have been ready to show mercy to others.—*Joseph Mede, 1586-1638.*

Verse 6. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* The stately and durable pyramids of Egypt have not transmitted to posterity even the names of those buried in them. And what has even embalming done, but tossed them about, and exposed them to all the world as spectacles to the curious, of meanness, or horror? But the piety of Abraham, of Jacob, of David and Samuel, of Hezekiah, Josiah and others, is celebrated to this very day. So when pyramids shall sink, and seas cease to roll, when sun and moon and stars shall be no more, *"the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."*—*John Dun, 1790.*

Verse 7. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.* How can you affright him? Bring him word his estate is ruined; "yet my inheritance is safe," says he. Your wife, or child, or dear friend is dead; "yet my Father lives." You yourself must die; "well, then, I go home to my Father, and to my inheritance." For the public troubles of the Church, doubtless it is both a most pious and generous temper, to be more deeply affected for these than for all our private ones; and to sympathise in the common calamities of any people, but especially of God's own people, hath been the character of men near unto him.

Observe the pathetic strains of the prophet's bewailing, when he foretells the desolation even of foreign kingdoms, much more of the Lord's chosen people, still mindful of Sion, and mournful of her distresses. (Jer 9:1, and the whole Book of Lamentations.) Yet even in this, with much compassion, there is a calm in a believer's mind; he finds amidst all hard news, yet still a fixed heart, trusting, satisfied in this, that deliverance shall come in due time, Ps 102:13, and that in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted, Isa 2:11,15,16; and that in all tumults and changes, and subversion of states, still the throne of God is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise, Ps 93:2. So Ps 29:10.—*Robert Leighton*.

Verse 7. *He shall not be afraid*, etc. If a man would lead a happy life, let him but seek a sure object for his trust, and he shall be safe: *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*. A man that puts his confidence in God, if he hears bad news of mischief coming towards him, as suppose a bad debt, a loss at sea, accidents by fire, tempests, or earthquakes, as Job had his messenger's of evil tidings, which came thick and threefold upon him, yet he is not afraid, for his heart is fixed on God: he hath laid up his confidence in God, therefore his heart is kept in an equal poise; he can say, as Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job 1:21. His comforts did not ebb and flow with the creature, but his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 7 (first clause). The good man will not be alarmed by any report of danger, whilst the dishonest man, conscious of his wickedness, is always in a state of fear.—*George Phillips*.

Verse 7. *His heart is fixed*, or prepared, ready, and in arms for all services; resolved not to give back, able to meet all adventures, and stand its ground. God is unchangeable; and therefore faith is invincible, for it sets the heart on him; fastens it there on the rock of eternity; then let winds blow and storms arise, it cares not.—*Robert Leighton*.

Verse 7. *His heart is fixed*—established fearlessly. So Moses, with the Red Sea before and the Egyptian foes behind (Ex 14:13); Jehoshaphat before the Ammonite horde of invaders (2Ch 20:12,15,17); Asa before Zerah, the Ethiopian's "thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots" (2Ch 14:9-12). Contrast with the persecuted David's fearless trust, Saul's panic stricken feeling at the Philistine invasion, inasmuch as he repaired for help to a witch. How bold were the three youths in prospect of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace! How fearless Stephen before the council! Basilus could say, in answer to the threats of Caesar Valens, "such bug bears should be set before children." Athanasius said of Julian, his persecutor, "He is a mist that will soon disappear."—*A. R. Fausset*.

Verse 7. *Trusting in the Lord*, I need not prove that a man can have no other sure comfort and support. For what can he confide in? His *treasure*? This may soon be exhausted, or it may awaken the avarice or ambition of a powerful enemy, as Hezekiah's did the king of Babylon, and so instead of being a defence, prove the occasion of his ruin. Can he confide in *power*? Alas, he knows that when

this is grown too big to fall by any other hands, it generally falls by its own. Can he finally confide in worldly *wisdom*? Alas, a thousand unexpected accidents, and unobserved latent circumstances, cross and frustrate this, and render the Ahithophels not only unfortunate, but often contemptible too.—*Richard Lucas*, 1648-1715.

Verse 8. *His heart is established.* Happy surely, is the man whose heart is thus established. Others may be politic, he only is wise; others may be fortunate, he only is great; others may drink deeper draughts of sensual pleasure, he only can eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. He is an image of that great Being whom he trusts...and in the midst of storms, and thunders, and earthquakes sits himself serene and undisturbed, bidding the prostrate world adore the Lord of the universe.—*George Gleig*, 1803.

Verse 8. *Until he see his desire upon his enemies.* His faith will not fail, nor shrink, nor change, while one by one his enemies are brought to the knowledge of the truth and the love of Christ, and he shall see his heart's desire fulfilled upon them, even that they may be saved.—*Plain Commentary*.

Verse 8. *Until he see his desire upon his enemies.* Or, according to the original, *Until he looks upon his oppressors*; that is, till he behold them securely, and, as we say, confidently looks in their faces; as being now no longer under their power, but being freed from their tyranny and oppression.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 9. When all the flashes of sensual pleasure are quite extinct, when all the flowers of secular glory are withered away; when all earthly treasures are buried in darkness; when this world, and all the fashion of it, are utterly vanished and gone, the bountiful man's state will be still firm and flourishing, and "*his righteousness shall endure for ever.*" His horn shall be exalted with honour. A horn is an emblem of *power*; for it is the beast's strength, offensive and defensive: and of *plenty*, for it hath within it a capacity apt to contain what is put into it; and of *sanctity*, for in it was put the holy oil, with which kings were consecrated; and of *dignity*, both in consequence upon the reasons mentioned (as denoting might, and influence, and sacredness accompanying sovereign dignity) and because also it is an especial beauty and ornament to the creature which hath it; so that this expression, "*his horn shall be exalted with honour*," may be supposed to import that an abundance of high, and holy, of firm and solid honour shall attend upon the bountiful person ... God will thus exalt the bountiful man's horn even here in this world, and to an infinitely higher pitch he will advance it in a future state.—*Isaac Barrow*, 1630-1677.

Verse 9. *For ever.* The Hebrew phrase in this text is not *Mlwel*, *in seculum*, which is sometimes used of a limited eternity, but *del*, *in eternum*, which seems more expressive of an endless duration, and is the very same phrase whereby the duration of God's righteousness is expressed in the foregoing psalm at the third verse.—*William Berriman*, 1688-1749.

Verses 9-10. These words are an enlargement of the character, begun at the first verse, of the

blessed man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. The author closes that character with an amiable description of his charity, and so leaves on our minds a strong impression, that benevolence of heart when displayed in the benefaction of the hand is the surest mark and fairest accomplishment of a moral and religious mind; which, whether it rewards the worthy, or relieves the unworthy object, is the noblest imitation of the dealings of God with mankind. For he rewardeth the good if any can be called so but himself, (though the name *good* is but *God* spread out). He beareth even with the wicked and stretcheth out his hand to save even them.—*Michael Cox.*

Verse 10. *The wicked.* The word *evr, the wicked*, is used emphatically, by the Jews, to denote him who neither gives to the poor himself, nor can endure to see other people give; while he who deserves but one part of this character is only said to have *an evil eye in regard of other people's substance, or in regard of his own.*—*Mishna.*

Verse 10. *The wicked shall see it and be grieved*, etc. The sight of Christ in glory with his saints, will, in an inexpressible manner torment the crucifiers of the one, and the persecutors of the other; as it will show them the hopes and wishes of their adversaries all granted to the full, and all their own "desires" and designs for ever at an end; it will excite envy which must prey upon itself, produce a grief which can admit of no comfort, give birth to a worm which can never die, and blow up those fires which nothing can quench.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved*, etc. It is the property of the Devil, not to mistake the nature of virtue, and esteem it criminal, but to hate it for this reason, because it is good, and therefore most opposite to his designs. The wicked, as his proper emissaries, resemble him in this, and grieve to have the foulness of their vices made conspicuous by being placed near the light of virtuous example...They may, like the giants of ancient fable, attempt a romantic war with heaven; but all their preparations for that purpose must recoil with double force upon themselves, and cover them with shame and confusion...If such be the effect of their malice in the present life, that, instead of injuring those they rage against, it usually turns to their own vexation, how much more, when the scene shall open in the life to come... They shall continue then to gnash their teeth (the wretched amusement of that cursed state) as well in grief and anguish for their own torments, as in rage and envy at the abundant honour which is done the saints.—*William Berriman.*

Verse 10. *The wicked shall see it, and be grieved*; that is, he shall have secret indignation in himself to see matters go so; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away. Gnashing of teeth is caused by vexing the heart; and therefore it follows, he melts away; which notes (melting is from the heart) an extreme heat within. The sense is very suitable to that of Eliphaz (Job 5:2) "wrath slayeth the foolish, "or wrath makes him melt away, it melts his grease with chafing, as we say of a man furiously vexed. Hence that deplorable condition of the damned, who are cast out of the presence of God for ever, is described by "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth"; which imports not only pain, but extreme

vexing at, or in themselves. These finally impenitent ones shall be slain for ever with their own wrath, as well as with the wrath of God.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 10. *The wicked shall see it.* The psalm which speaks of the blessedness of the saints also bears solemn testimony to the doom of the wicked. Cowper sings as if this verse was before his eyes.

...The same word, that like the polished share
Ploughs up the roots of a believer's care,
Kills, too, the flowery weeds wherever they grow,
That bind the sinner's Bacchanalian brow.
Oh that unwelcome voice of heavenly love,
Sad messenger of mercy from above,
How does it grate upon his thankless ear,
Crippling his pleasures with the cramp of fear.
His will and judgment at continual strife,
That civil war embitters all his life;
In vain he points his powers against the skies,
In vain he closes or averts his eyes;
Truth will intrude.

Verse 10. *He shall gnash with his teeth.* An enraged man snaps his teeth together, as if about to bite the object of his anger. Thus in the book *Ramyanum*, the giant Ravana is described as in his fury gnashing together his "thirty-two teeth!" Of angry men it is frequently said, "Look at the beast, how he gnashes his teeth!" "*Go near that fellow!* not I, indeed! he will only gnash his teeth."—*Joseph Roberts*.

Verse 10. *He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.* The effect of envy, which consumes the envious. Thus the poet: "Envy is most hateful, but has some good in it, for it makes the eyes and the heart of the envious to pine away."—*John Le Clerc, 1657-1736*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. "Praise ye the LORD."

1. Who should be praised? Not man, self, wealth, etc., but God only.
2. Who should praise him? All men, but specially his people, the blessed ones described in this psalm.
3. Why should they do it? For all the reasons mentioned in succeeding verses.
4. How should they do it? Chiefly by leading such a life as is here described.

Verse 1 (second clause).

1. Fear of the Lord; what it is.

2. Its connection with the delight mentioned.

3. The qualities in the commandments which excite delight in God fearing minds.

Verse 2. The real might of the holy seed and their true blessedness.

Verse 3. The riches of a Christian: content, peace, security, power in prayer, promises, providence, yea, God himself.

Verse 3. The enduring character of true righteousness.

1. Based on eternal principles.

2. Growing out of an incorruptible seed.

3. Sustained by a faithful God.

4. United to the ever living Christ.

Verse 3. Connection of the two clauses—How to be wealthy and righteous. Note the following verses, and show how liberality is needful if rich men would be righteous men.

Verse 4 (whole verse).

1. The upright have their dark times.

2. They shall receive comfort.

3. Their own character will secure this.

Verse 4 (first clause).

1. The character of the righteous: "upright, " "gracious, "etc.

2. His privilege.

(a) Light as well as darkness.

(b) More light than darkness.

(c) Light in darkness: inward light in the midst of surrounding darkness. Light seen above, when all is dark below. Even darkness itself becomes the harbinger of day.—G. R.

Verse 4 (last clause). A Trinity of excellencies found in true Christians, in Christ, and in God: their union forms a perfect character when they are well balanced. Show how they are exemplified in daily life.

Verse 5.

1. A good man is benevolent, but a benevolent man is not always good.

2. A good man is prudent, but a prudent man is not always a good man. There must first be goodness and then its fruits. "Make the tree good, "etc.—G.R.

Verse 5. "Lending."

1. It is to be done.

2. It is to be done as a favour; borrowing is seeking alms.

3. It should be done very discreetly. Add to this a homily on borrowing and repaying.

Verse 6.

1. In this life the Christian is,
 - a. Steadfast;
 - b. Calm;
 - c. Unconquerable: and
2. When this life is over his memory is,
 - a. Beloved;
 - b. Influential;
 - c. Perpetual.

Verse 6.

1. The character of the righteous is eternal: "surely," etc.
2. His influence upon others is eternal: "shall be had," etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 7.

1. "He shall not be afraid, "etc.: peaceful.
2. "His heart is fixed": restful.
3. "Trusting in the Lord": trustful; the cause of the former.

Verse 7.

1. The waves: "evil tidings."
2. The steady ship: "he shall not be afraid."
3. The anchor: "his heart is fixed, trusting."
4. The anchorage: "in the Lord."

Verse 8. Heart establishment, the confidence which flows from it, the sight which shall be seen by him who possesses it.

Verse 8.

1. The security of the righteous: "his heart is established."
2. His tranquillity: "he shall not be afraid; "and,
3. His expectancy: "until, "etc.—*G.R.*

Verse 9. Benevolence: its exercise in alms giving, its preserving influence upon character, and the honour which it wins.

Verse 10.

1. What the wicked must see, and its effect upon them.
2. What they shall never see (their desire), and the result of their disappointment.

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH PSALM

An Exposition upon the 112 Psalme. The high way to everlasting *blessednesse*. *Written for the benefit of God's Church*. By T. S. . . . London, 1621. (8vo. This exposition is upon the first two verses

of the Psalm only.)

Psalm 113

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. This Psalm is one of pure praise, and contains but little which requires exposition; a warm heart full of admiring adoration of the Most High will best of all comprehend this sacred hymn. Its subject is the greatness and condescending goodness of the God of Israel, as exhibited in lifting up the needy from their low estate. It may fitly be sung by the church during a period of revival after it has long been minished and brought low. With this Psalm begins the Hallel, or Hallelujah of the Jews, which was sung at their solemn feasts: we will therefore call it **THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HALLEL**. Dr. Edersheim tells us that the Talmud dwells upon the peculiar suitableness of the Hallel to the Passover, "since it not only recorded the goodness of God towards Israel, but especially their deliverance from Egypt, and therefore appropriately opened with *Praise ye Jehovah, ye servants of Jehovah*, —and no longer servants of Pharaoh." Its allusions to the poor in the dust and the needy upon the dunghill are all in keeping with Israel in Egypt, and so also is the reference to the birth of numerous children where they were least expected.

DIVISION. No division need be made in the exposition of this Psalm, except it be that which is suggested by the always instructive headings supplied by the excellent authors of our common version: an exhortation to praise God, for his excellency, 1-5; for his mercy.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD*, or Hallelujah, praise to JAH Jehovah. Praise is an essential offering at all the solemn feasts of the people of God. Prayer is the myrrh, and praise is the frankincense, and both of these must be presented unto the Lord. How can we pray for mercy for the future if we do not bless God for his love in the past? The Lord hath wrought all good things for us, let us therefore adore him. All other praise is to be excluded, the entire devotion of the soul must be poured out unto Jehovah only. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD. Ye above all men, for ye are bound to do so by your calling and profession. If God's own servants do not praise him, who will? Ye are a people near unto him, and should be heartiest in your loving gratitude. While they were slaves of Pharaoh, the Israelites uttered groans and sighs by reason of their hard bondage; but now that they had become servants of the Lord, they were to express themselves in songs of joy. His service is perfect freedom,

and those who fully enter into it discover in that service a thousand reasons for adoration. They are sure to praise God best who serve him best; indeed, service is praise. Praise the name of the LORD: extol his revealed character, magnify every sacred attribute, exult in all his doings, and reverence the very name by which he is called. The name of Jehovah is thrice used in this verse, and may by us who understand the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity be regarded as a thinly veiled allusion to that holy mystery. Let Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all be praised as the one, only, living, and true God. The close following of the words, "Hallelujah, Hallelu, Hallelu," must have had a fine effect in the public services. Dr. Edersheim describes the temple service as responsive, and says, "Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while to each of the others they responded by a *Hallelu Jah* or *Praise ye the Lord*" thus—

The Levites began: *Hallelujah* (Praise ye the Lord).

The people repeated: *Hallelu Jah*.

The Levites: Praise (*Hallelu*), O ye servants of Jehovah.

The people responded: *Hallelu Jah*.

The Levites: Praise (*Hallelu*) the name of Jehovah.

The people responded: *Hallelu Jah*.

These were not vain repetitions, for the theme is one which we ought to dwell upon; it should be deeply impressed upon the soul, and perseveringly kept prominent in the life.

Verse 2. *Blessed be the name of the LORD.* While praising him aloud, the people were also to bless him in the silence of their hearts, wishing glory to his name, success to his cause, and triumph to his truth. By mentioning the name, the Psalmist would teach us to bless each of the attributes of the Most High, which are as it were the letters of his name; not quarrelling with his justice or his severity, nor servilely dreading his power, but accepting him as we find him revealed in the inspired word and by his own acts, and loving him and praising him as such. We must not give the Lord a new name nor invent a new nature, for that would be the setting up of a false god. Every time we think of the God of Scripture we should bless him, and his august name should never be pronounced without joyful reverence. From this time forth. If we have never praised him before, let us begin now. As the Passover stood at the beginning of the year it was well to commence the new year with blessing him who wrought deliverance for his people. Every solemn feast had its own happy associations, and might be regarded as a fresh starting place for adoration. Are there not reasons why the reader should make the present day the opening of a year of praise? When the Lord says, "From this time will I bless you," we ought to reply, "*Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth.*" And for evermore: eternally. The Psalmist could not have intended that the divine praise should cease at a future date however remote. "*For evermore*" in reference to the praise of God must signify endless duration: are we wrong in believing that it bears the same meaning when it refers to gloomier

themes? Can our hearts ever cease to praise the name of the Lord? Can we imagine a period in which the praises of Israel shall no more surround the throne of the Divine Majesty? Impossible. For ever, and more than "for ever, "if more can be, let him be magnified.

Verse 3. *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.* From early morn till eve the ceaseless hymn should rise unto Jehovah's throne, and from east to west over the whole round earth pure worship should be rendered unto his glory. So ought it to be; and blessed be God, we are not without faith that so it shall be. We trust that ere the world's dread evening comes, the glorious name of the Lord will be proclaimed among all nations, and all people shall call him blessed. At the first proclamation of the gospel the name of the Lord was glorious throughout the whole earth; shall it not be much more so ere the end shall be? At any rate, this is the desire of our souls. Meanwhile, let us endeavour to sanctify every day with praise to God.

At early dawn let us emulate the opening flowers and the singing birds,

"Chanting every day their lauds,
While the grove their song applauds;
Wake for shame my sluggish heart,
Wake and gladly sing thy part."

It is a marvel of mercy that the sun should rise on the rebellious sons of men, and prepare for the undeserving fruitful seasons and days of pleasantness; let us for this prodigy of goodness praise the Lord of all. From hour to hour let us renew the strain, for each moment brings its mercy; and when the sun sinks to his rest, let us not cease our music, but lift up the vesper hymn—

"Father of heaven and earth!
I bless thee for the night,
The soft still night!
The holy pause of care and mirth,
Of sound and light.
Now far in glade and dell,
Flower cup, and bud, and bell
Have shut around the sleeping woodlark's nest,
The bee's long murmuring toils are done,
And I, the over wearied one,
Bless thee, O God, O Father of the oppressed!
With my last waking thought."

Verse 4. *The Lord is high above all nations.* Though the Gentiles knew him not, yet was Jehovah their ruler: their false gods were no gods, and their kings were puppets in his hands. The Lord is high above all the learning, judgment, and imagination of heathen sages, and far beyond the pomp and

might of the monarchs of the nations. Like the great arch of the firmament, the presence of the Lord spans all the lands where dwell the varied tribes of men, for his providence is universal: this may well excite our confidence and praise. And his glory above the heavens: higher than the loftiest part of creation; the clouds are the dust of his feet, and sun, moon, and stars twinkle far below his throne. Even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. His glory cannot be set forth by the whole visible universe, nor even by the solemn pomp of angelic armies; it is above all conception and imagination, for he is God—infinite. Let us above all adore him who is above all.

Verse 5. *Who is like unto the LORD our God?* The challenge will never be answered. None can be compared with him for an instant; Israel's God is without parallel; our own God in covenant stands alone, and none can be likened unto him. Even those whom he has made like himself in some respects are not like him in godhead, for his divine attributes are many of them incommunicable and inimitable. None of the metaphors and figures by which the Lord is set forth in the Scriptures can give us a complete idea of him; his full resemblance is borne by nothing in earth or in heaven. Only in Jesus is the Godhead seen, but he unhesitatingly declared "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Who dwelleth on high. In the height of his abode none can be like him. His throne, his whole character, his person, his being, everything about him, is lofty, and infinitely majestic, so that none can be likened unto him. His serene mind abides in the most elevated condition, he is never dishonoured, nor does he stoop from the pure holiness and absolute perfection of his character. His saints are said to dwell on high, and in this they are the reflection of his glory; but as for himself, the height of his dwelling place surpasses thought, and he rises far above the most exalted of his glorified people.

"Eternal Power! whose high abode
Becomes the grandeur of a God:
Infinite lengths beyond the bounds
Where stars revolve their little rounds."

"The lowest step around thy seat
Rises too high for Gabriel's feet;
In vain the tall archangel tries
To reach thine height with wondering eyes."

"Lord, what shall earth and ashes do?
We would adore our Maker too;
From sin and dust to thee we cry,
The Great, the Holy, and the High!"

Verse 6. *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!* He dwells so far on high that even to observe heavenly things he must humble himself. He must stoop to view

the skies, and bow to see what angels do. What, then, must be his condescension, seeing that he observes the humblest of his servants upon earth, and makes them sing for joy like Mary when she said, "Thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaiden." How wonderful are those words of Isaiah, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Heathen philosophers could not believe that the great God was observant of the small events of human history; they pictured him as abiding in serene indifference to all the wants and woes of his creatures. "Our Rock is not as their rock"; we have a God who is high above all gods, and yet who is our Father, knowing what we have need of before we ask him; our Shepherd, who supplies our needs; our Guardian, who counts the hairs of our heads; our tender and considerate Friend, who sympathizes in all our griefs. Truly the name of our condescending God should be praised wherever it is known.

Verse 7. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust.* This is an instance of his gracious stoop of love: he frequently lifts the lowest of mankind out of their poverty and degradation and places them in positions of power and honour. His good Spirit is continually visiting the down trodden, giving beauty for ashes to those who are cast down, and elevating the hearts of his mourners till they shout for joy. These up liftings of grace are here ascribed directly to the divine hand, and truly those who have experienced them will not doubt the fact that it is the Lord alone who brings his people up from the dust of sorrow and death. When no hand but his can help he interposes, and the work is done. It is worth while to be cast down to be so divinely raised from the dust. And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, whereon they lay like worthless refuse, cast off and cast out, left as they thought to rot into destruction, and to be everlastingly forgotten. How great a stoop from the height of his throne to a dunghill! How wonderful that power which occupies itself in lifting up beggars, all befouled with the filthiness in which they lay! For he lifts them *out of* the dunghill, not disdainingly to search them out from amidst the base things of the earth that he may by their means bring to nought the great ones, and pour contempt upon all human glorying. What a dunghill was that upon which we lay by nature! What a mass of corruption is our original estate! What a heap of loathsomeness we have accumulated by our sinful lives! What reeking abominations surround us in the society of our fellow men! We could never have risen out of all this by our own efforts, it was a sepulchre in which we saw corruption, and were as dead men. Almighty were the arms which lifted us, which are still lifting us, and will lift us into the perfection of heaven itself. Praise ye the Lord.

Verse 8. *That he may set him with princes.* The Lord does nothing by halves: when he raises men from the dust he is not content till he places them among the peers of his kingdom. We are made kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever. Instead of poverty, he gives us the wealth of princes; and instead of dishonour, he gives us a more exalted rank than that of the great

ones of the earth. Even with the princes of his people. All his people are princes, and so the text teaches us that God places needy souls whom he favours among the princes of princes. He often enables those who have been most despairing to rise to the greatest heights of spirituality and gracious attainment, for those who once were last shall be first. Paul, though less than the least of all saints was, nevertheless, made to be not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles; and in our own times, Bunyan, the blaspheming tinker, was raised into another John, whose dream almost rivals the visions of the Apocalypse.

"Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat his mercies in your song."

Such verses as these should give great encouragement to those who are lowest in their own esteem. The Lord poureth contempt upon princes; but as for those who are in the dust and on the dunghill, he looks upon them with compassion, acts towards them in grace, and in their case displays the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus. Those who have experienced such amazing favour should sing continual hallelujahs to the God of their salvation.

Verse 9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.* The strong desire of the easterns to have children caused the birth of offspring to be hailed as the choicest of favours, while barrenness was regarded as a curse; hence this verse is placed last as if to crown the whole, and to serve as a climax to the story of God's mercy. The glorious Lord displays his condescending grace in regarding those who are despised on account of their barrenness, whether it be of body or of soul. Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the psalmist. Women were not supposed to have a house till they had children; but in certain cases where childless women pined in secret the Lord visited them in mercy, and made them not only to have a house, but to keep it. The Gentile church is a spiritual example upon a large scale of the gift of fruitfulness after long years of hopeless barrenness; and the Jewish church in the latter days will be another amazing display of the same quickening power: long forsaken for her spiritual adultery, Israel shall be forgiven, and restored, and joyously shall she keep that house which now is left unto her desolate. Nor is this all, each believer in the Lord Jesus must at times have mourned his lamentable barrenness; he has appeared to be a dry tree yielding no fruit to the Lord, and yet when visited by the Holy Ghost, he has found himself suddenly to be like Aaron's rod, which budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. Or ever we have been aware, our barren heart has kept house, and entertained the Saviour, our graces have been multiplied as if many children had come to us at a single birth, and we have exceedingly rejoiced before the Lord. Then have we marvelled greatly at the Lord who dwelleth on high, that he has deigned to visit such poor worthless things. Like Mary, we have lifted up our Magnificat, and like Hannah, we have said, "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside

thee: neither is there any rock like our God." Praise ye the LORD. The music concludes upon its key note. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease. Let us praise him in youth, and all along our years of strength; and when we bow in the ripeness of abundant age, let us still praise the Lord, who doth not cast off his old servants. Let us not only praise God ourselves, but exhort others to do it; and if we meet with any of the needy who have been enriched, and with the barren who have been made fruitful, let us join with them in extolling the name of him whose mercy endureth for ever. Having been ourselves lifted from spiritual beggary and barrenness, let us never forget our former estate or the grace which has visited us, but world without end let us praise the Lord. Hallelujah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. With this Psalm begins the *Hallel*, which is recited at the three great feasts, at the feast of the Dedication (*Chanucca*) and at the new moons, and not on New Year's day and the day of Atonement, because a cheerful song of praise does not harmonise with the mournful solemnity of these days. And they are recited only in fragments during the last days of the Passover, for "my creatures, saith the Holy One, blessed be He, were drowned in the sea, and ought ye to break out into songs of rejoicing?" In the family celebration of the Passover night it is divided into two parts, the one half, Psalm 113-114, being sung before the repast, before the emptying of the second festal cup, and the other half, Psalm 115-118, after the repast, after the filling of the fourth cup, to which the *umhsantev* (Mt 26:30 Mk 14:26), or singing a hymn, after the institution of the Lord's Supper, which was connected with the fourth festal cup, may refer. Paulus Burgensis styles Psalm 113 to Psalm 118 *Alleluja Judaeorum magnum*. (The great Alleluiah of the Jews). This designation is also frequently found elsewhere. But according to the prevailing custom, Psalm 113-118, and more particularly Psalm 115-118, are called only *Hallel*, and Psalm 136, with its "for his mercy endureth for ever" repeated twenty-six times, bears the name of "*The Great Hallel*" (Iwdgh llh).—*Frank Delitzsch*.

Whole Psalm. The Jews have handed down the tradition, that this Psalm, and those that follow on to the 118th, were all sung at the Passover; and they are denominated "*The Great Hallel*." This tradition shows, at all events, that the ancient Jews perceived in these six psalms some link of close connection. They all sing of God the Redeemer, in some aspect of his redeeming character; and this being so, while they suited the paschal feast, we can see how appropriate they would be in the lips of the Redeemer, in his Upper Room. Thus—

In Psalm 113, he sang praise to him who redeems from the lowest depth.

In Psalm 114, he sang praise to him who once redeemed Israel, and shall redeem Israel again.

In Psalm 115, he uttered a song—over earth's fallen idols—to him who blesses Israel and the world.

In Psalm 116, he sang his resurrection song of thanksgiving by anticipation.

In Psalm 117, he led the song of praise for the great congregation.

In Psalm 118 (just before leaving the Upper Room to go to Gethsemane), he poured forth the story of his suffering, conflict, triumph and glorification.—A. A. Bonar.

Whole Psalm. An attentive reader of the Book of Psalms will observe that almost every one of them has a view to Christianity. Many, if not most of the psalms, were without doubt occasioned originally by accidents of the life that befell their royal author; they were therefore at the same time both descriptive of the situation and life, the actions and sufferings, of King David, and predictive also of our Saviour, who was all along represented by King David, from whose loins he was descended according to the flesh. But *this* Psalm appears to be *wholly* written with a view to Christianity. It begins with an exhortation to all true servants and zealous worshippers of God, to "*praise his name, at all times, and in all places; from this time forth and for evermore, and from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.*" And the ground of this praise and adoration is set forth in the following verses to be,—first, the glorious majesty of his Divine nature; and next, the singular goodness of it as displayed to us in his works of providence, particularly by exalting those who are abased, and his making the barren to become fruitful. His lifting the poor out of the mire, and making the barren woman to become fruitful, may, at first sight, seem an odd mixture of ideas. But a right notion of the prophetic language will solve the difficulty; and teach us, that both the expressions are in fact very nearly related, and signify much the same thing. For by the "*poor*" are here meant those who are destitute of all heavenly knowledge (the only true and real riches) and who are sunk in the mire and filth of sin. So, again, his making "*the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children,*" is a prophetic metaphor, or allusion to the fruitfulness of the Church in bringing forth sons or professors of the true religion. My interpretation of both these expressions is warrantable from so many parallel passages of Scripture. I shall only observe that here the profession of the Christian faith throughout the whole earth is foretold; as also the particular direction or point of the compass, toward which Christianity should by the course of God's providence be steered and directed, viz., from East to West, or "*from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.*"—James Bate, 1703-1775.

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD. Praise.* The willh is repeated. This repetition is not without significance. It is for the purpose of waking us up out of our torpor. We are all too dull and slow in considering and praising the blessings of God. There is, therefore, necessity for these stimuli. Then this repetition signifies assiduity and perseverance in sounding forth the praises of God. It is not sufficient once and again to praise God, but his praises ought to be always sung in the Church.—Mollerus.

Verse 1. *Praise ye the Lord.* This praising God rests not in the mere speculation or idle contemplation of the Divine excellence, floating only in the brain, or gliding upon the tongue, but in such quick and

lively apprehensions of them as to sink down into the heart, and there beget affections suitable to them; for it will make us love him for his goodness, respect him for his greatness, fear him for his justice, dread him for his power, adore him for his wisdom, and for all his attributes make us live in constant awe and obedience to him. This is to praise God, without which all other courting and complimenting of him is but mere flattery and hypocrisy...God Almighty endowed us with higher and nobler faculties than other creatures, for this end, that we should set forth his praise; for though other things were made to administer the matter and occasion, yet man alone was designed and qualified to exercise the act of glorifying God...In short, God Almighty hath so closely twisted his own glory and our happiness together, that at the same time we advance the one we promote the other.—*Matthew Hole*, 1730.

Verse 1. *Praise, O ye servants of the LORD.* From the exhortation to praise God, and the declaration of his deserving to be praised; learn, that as it is all men's duty to praise the Lord, so in special it is the duty of his ministers, and officers of his house. First, because their office doth call for the discharge of it publicly. Next, because as they should be best acquainted with the reasons of his praise, so also should they be the fittest instruments to declare it. And lastly, because the ungodly are deaf unto the exhortation, and dumb in the obedience of it; therefore when he hath said, "*Praise ye the Lord,*" he subjoins, "*Praise, O ye servants of the Lord.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1. *Ye servants of the LORD.* All men owe this duty to God, as being the workmanship of his hands; Christians above other men, as being the sheep of his pasture; preachers of the word above other Christians, as being pastors of his sheep, and so consequently patterns in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in pureness. 1Ti 4:12.—*John Boys*.

Verses 1-3.

Hallelujah, praise the Lord!
Praise, ye servants, praise his name!
Be Jehovah's praise adored,
Now and evermore the same!
Where the orient sunbeams gleam.
Where they sink in ocean's stream,
Through the circuit of his rays
Be your theme Jehovah's praise.
Richard Mant.

Verse 2. *Blessed be the name of the LORD.* Let then, O man, thy labouring soul strive to conceive (for 'tis impossible to express) what an immense debt of gratitude thou owest to him, who by his creating goodness called thee out of nothing to make thee a partaker of reason and even a sharer of immortality with himself; who by his preserving goodness designs to conduct thee safe through the

various stages of thy eternal existence; and who by his redeeming goodness hath prepared for thee a happiness too big for the comprehension of a human understanding. Canst thou receive such endearments of love to thee and all mankind with insensibility and coldness? ...In the whole compass of language what word is expressive enough to paint the black ingratitude of that man who is unaffected by, and entirely regardless of, the goodness of God his Creator and the mercies of Christ?—*Jeremiah Seed, 1747.*

Verse 2. *Blessed be the name of the LORD*, etc. No doubt the disciples that sat at that paschal table would repeat with mingled feelings of thanksgiving and sadness that ascription of praise. *Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.* But what Israelite in all the paschal chambers at Jerusalem on that night, as he sang the hallel or hymn, or which of the disciples at the sorrowing board of Jesus, could have understood or entered into the full meaning of the expression, "*from this time forth?*" From what time? I think St. John gives us a clue to the very hour and moment of which the Psalmist, perhaps unconsciously, spake. He tells us, that when the traitor Judas had received the sop, he immediately went out; and that when he was gone out to clench as it were and ratify his treacherous purpose, Jesus said, "*Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.*" From that time forth, when by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the Son of man was about to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and crucified and slain, as Jesus looked at those around him, as sorrow had indeed filled their hearts, and as with all seeing, prescient eye he looked onwards and beheld all those that should hereafter believe on him through their word, with what significance and emphasis of meaning may we imagine the blessed Jesus on that night of anguish to have uttered these words of the hymn, "*Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore!*" "A few more hours and the covenant will be sealed in my own blood; the compact ratified, when I hang upon the cross." And with what calm and confident assurance of triumph does he look upon that cross of shame; with what overflowing love does he point to it and say, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"! It is the very same here in this Paschal Psalm; and how must the Saviour's heart have rejoiced even in the contemplation of those sufferings that awaited him, as he uttered this prediction, "*From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised!*" "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die:" and thus from that hour to the present the Lord hath added daily to the church those whom in every age and in every clime he hath chosen unto salvation, till, in his own appointed fulness of time, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, all nations shall do him service, and the "earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2. *From this time forth and for evermore.* The servants of the Lord are to sing his praises in this life to the world's end; and in the next life, world without end.—*John Boys.*

Verse 3. *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same.* That is everywhere, from east

to west. These western parts of the world are particularly prophesied of to enjoy the worship of God after the Jews which were in the east; and these islands of ours that lie in the sea, into which the sun is said to go down, which is an expression of the old Greek poets; and the prophet here useth such a word in the Hebrew, where the west is called, according to the vulgar conceit, the sunset, or the sun's going down, or going in.—*Samuel Torshell, 1641.*

Verses 4-5. The LORD is high...The LORD our God dwelleth on high. But how *high* is he? *Answer*

1. So high, that all creatures bow before him and do homage to him according to their several aptitudes and abilities. John brings them all in, attributing to him the crown of glory, putting it from themselves, but setting it upon his head, as a royalty due only to him. (Re 5:13)

(a) Some by way of subjection, stooping to him: angels and saints worship him, acknowledging his highness, by denying their own, but setting up his will as their supreme law and excellency.

(b) Others acknowledge his eminency by their consternation upon the least shining forth of his glory; when he discovers but the emblems of his greatness, devils tremble, men quake, Jas 2:19; Isa 33:14.

(c) Thirdly, even inanimate creatures, by compliance with, and ready subjection to, the impressions of his power, Hab 3:9-11 Isa 48:13 Da 4:35.

2. He is so high that he surmounts all created capacity to comprehend him, Job 11:7-9. So that indeed, in David's phrase, his greatness is "*unsearchable*," Ps 145:3. In a word, he is so high,

(a) That no bodily eye hath ever, or can possibly see him.

(b) Neither can the eye of the understanding perfectly reach him. He dwells in inaccessible light that no mortal eye can attain to.—*Condensed from a sermon by Thomas Hedges, entitled, "A Glimpse of God's Glory," 1642.*

Verse 6. *Who humbleth himself.* Whatever may be affirmed of God, may be affirmed of him infinitely, and whatever he is, he is infinitely. So the psalmist, in this place, does not speak of God as humble, but as infinitely and superlatively so, humble beyond all conception and comparison; he challenges the whole universe of created nature, from the highest immortal spirit in heaven to the lowest mortal on earth, to show a being endued with so much humility, as the adorable majesty of the great God of Heaven and earth...If some instances of the Divine humility surprise, the following may amaze us: To see the great King of heaven stooping from his height, and condescending himself to offer terms of reconciliation to his rebellious creatures! To see offended majesty courting the offenders to accept of pardon! To see God persuading, entreating and beseeching men to return to him with such earnestness and importunity, as if his very life were bound up in them, and his own happiness depended upon theirs! To see the adorable Spirit of God, with infinite long suffering and gentleness, submitting to the contempt and insults of such miserable, despicable wretches as sinful mortals are! Is not this amazing?—*Valentine Nalson, 1641-1724.*

Verse 6. *Who humbleth himself to behold.* If it be such condescension for God to behold things in

heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Here indeed he humbled himself.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7. *He raiseth up the poor*, etc. There is no doubt a reference in this to the respect which God pays even to the lower ranks of the race, seeing that "*he raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy*." I have no doubt there is reference throughout the whole of this psalm to evangelical times; that, in this respect, it is a prophetic psalm, including a reference especially to Christianity, as it may be called by eminence and distinction the religion of the poor—its greatest glory. For when John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus, to know whether he was the Messiah or not, the answer of our Lord was, "The blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised"—all extraordinary events—miracles, in short, which proved his divine commission. And he summed up the whole by saying, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them; "as great a miracle as any—as great a distinction as any. There never was a religion but the true religion, in all its various dispensations, that had equal respect to all classes of society. In all others there was a privileged class, but here there is none. Perhaps one of the most interesting views of Christianity we can take is its wonderful adaptation to the character and circumstances of the poor. What an opportunity does it furnish for the manifestation of the bright and mild graces of the Holy Spirit! What sources of comfort does it open to mollify the troubles of life! and how often, in choosing the poor, rich in faith, to make them heirs of the kingdom, does God exalt the poor out of the dust, and the needy from the dunghill!—*Richard Watson*.

Verse 7. *He raiseth up the poor*, etc. Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles from fishing are sent to be "fishers of men." The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and the foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the "wise and mighty" (1Co 1:27-28), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7. *He raiseth up the poor*. The highest honour, which was ever done to any mere creature, was done out of regard to the lowest humility; the Son of God had such regard to the lowliness of the blessed virgin, that he did her the honour to choose her for the mother of his holy humanity. It is an observation of S. Chrysostom, that that very hand which the humble John Baptist thought not worthy to unloose the shoe on our blessed Saviour's feet, that hand our Lord thought worthy to baptize his sacred head.—*Valentine Nalson*.

Verse 7. *And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill*; which denotes a mean condition; so one born in a mean place, and brought up in a mean manner, is sometimes represented as taken out of a dunghill; and also it is expressive of a filthy one; men by sin are not only brought into a low estate, but into a

loathsome one, and are justly abominable in the sight of God, and yet he lifts them out of it: the phrases of *raising up* and *lifting out* suppose them to be fallen, as men are in Adam, fallen from a state of honour and glory, in and out of which they cannot deliver themselves; it is Christ's work, and his only, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to help or lift up his servant Israel. Isa 49:6 Lu 1:54; see 1Sa 2:8.—*John Gill*.

Verse 7. *The poor...the needy.* Rejoice, then, in the favourable notice God taketh of you. The highest and greatest of beings vouchsafes to regard you. Though you are poor and mean, and men overlook you; though your brethren hate you, and your friends go far from you, yet hear! God looketh down from his majestic throne upon you. Amidst the infinite variety of his works, you are not overlooked. Amidst the nobler services of ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels, not *one* of your fervent prayers or humble groans escapes his ear.—*Job Orton, 1717-1783.*

Verse 7. Almighty God cannot look above himself, as having no superiors; nor about himself, as having no equals; he beholds such as are below him; and therefore the lower a man is, the nearer unto God; he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, 1Pe 5:5. He pulls down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth them of low degree. The Most High hath special eye to such as are most humble; for, as it followeth in our text, "*he taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the dirt.*"—*John Boys.*

Verse 7. *Dunghill.* An emblem of the deepest poverty and desertion; for in Syria and Palestine the man who is shut out from society lies upon the *mezbele* (the dunghill or heap of ashes), by day calling upon the passers by for alms, and by night hiding himself in the ashes that have been warmed by the sun.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7. *Dunghill.* The passages of the Bible, in which the word occurs, all seem to refer, as Parkhurst remarks, to the stocks of cow dung and other offal stuff, which the easterns for want of wood were obliged to lay up for fuel.—*Richard Mant.*

Verses 7, 8. These verses are taken almost word for word from the prayer of Hannah, 1Sa 2:8. The transition to the "*people*" is all the more natural, as Hannah, considering herself at the conclusion as the type of the church, with which every individual among the Israelites felt himself much more closely entwined than can easily be the case among ourselves, draws out of the salvation imparted to herself joyful prospects for the future.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8. *Even with the princes of his people.* It is the honour that cometh from God that alone exalts. Whatever account the world may take of a poor man, he may be more precious in the eyes of God than the highest among men. The humble poor are here ranked, not with the princes of the earth, but with "*the princes of his people.*" The distinctions in this world, even among those who serve the same God, are as nothing in his sight when contrasted with that honour which is grounded on the free grace of God to his own. But here, also, the fulness of this statement will only be seen in the world to

come, when all the faithful will be owned as kings and priests unto God.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 9. *Ye maketh the barren woman to keep house*, etc. Should a married woman, who has long been considered sterile, become a mother, her joy, and that of her husband and friends, will be most extravagant. "They called her *Malady*, "that is, "Barren, ""but she has given us good fruit." "My neighbours pointed at me, and said, *Malady*:but what will they say now?" A man who on any occasion manifests great delight, is represented to be like the barren woman who has at length borne a child. Anything which is exceedingly valuable is thus described: "This is as precious as the son of the barren woman"; that is, of her who had long been reputed barren.—*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house*, etc. As baseness in men, so barrenness in women is accounted a great unhappiness. But as God lifteth up the beggar out of the mire, to set him with princes, even so doth he "*make the barren woman a joyful mother of children.*" He governs all things in the private family, as well as in the public weal. Children and the fruit of the womb are a gift and heritage that cometh of the Lord, Ps 127:3; and therefore the Papists in praying to S. Anne for children, and the Gentiles in calling upon Diana, Juno, Latona, are both in error. It is God only who makes the barren woman "*a mother*, "and that "*a joyful mother.*" Every mother is joyful at the first, according to that of Christ, "a woman when she travaileth hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Divines apply this also mystically to Christ, affirming that he made the church of the Gentiles, heretofore "*barren*, ""*a joyful mother of children*, "according to that of the prophet: "Rejoice, *O barren*, that didst not bear; break forth into joy and rejoice, thou that didst not travail with child: for the desolate hath more children than the married wife, saith the Lord, "Isa 54:1. Or it may be construed of true Christians: all of us are by nature barren of goodness, conceived and born in sin, not able to think a good thought (2Co 3:5); but the Father of lights and mercies makes us fruitful and abundant always in the work of the Lord (1Co 15:58); he giveth us grace to be fathers and mothers of many good deeds, which are our children and best heirs, eternizing our name for ever.—*John Boys.*

Verse 9. *The barren woman* is the poor, forsaken, distressed Christian church, whom the false church oppresses, defies, and persecutes, and regards as useless, miserable, barren, because she herself is greater and more populous, the greatest part of the world.—*Joshua Arndt, 1626-1685.*

Verse 9. *Praise ye the Lord.* We may look abroad, and see abundant occasion for praising God,—in his condescension to human affairs,—in his lifting up the poor from the humblest condition,—in his exalting those of lowly rank to places of honour, trust, wealth, and power; but, after all, if we wish to find occasions of praise that will most tenderly affect the heart, and be connected with the warmest affections of the soul, they will be most likely to be found in the domestic circle—in the mutual love—the common joys the tender feelings—which bind together the members of a family.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9. *Praise ye the LORD.* The very hearing of the comfortable changes which the Lord can make and doth make the afflicted to find, is a matter of refreshment to all, and of praise to God from all.—*David Dickson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. The psalm contains three parts:

1. An exhortation to God's servants to praise him.
2. A form set down how and where to praise him, ver. 2, 3.
3. The reasons to persuade us to it.
 - (a) By his infinite power, ver. 4, 5.
 - (b) His providence, as displayed in heaven and earth, verse 6.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1. The repetitions show,

1. The importance of praise.
2. Our many obligations to render it.
3. Our backwardness in the duty.
4. The heartiness and frequency with which it should be rendered.
5. The need of calling upon others to join with us.

Verse 1.

1. To whom praise is due: "the Lord."
2. From whom it is due: "ye servants of the Lord."
3. For what is it due: his "name."
 - a. For all names descriptive of what he is in himself.
 - b. For all names descriptive of what he is to his servants.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 9. Praise ye the Lord.

1. Begin and end life with it, and do the same with holy service, patient suffering, and everything else.
2. Fill up the interval with praise. Run over the intervening verses.

Verse 2.

1. The work of heaven begun on earth: to praise the name of the Lord.
2. The work of earth continued in heaven: "and for evermore." If the praise begun on earth be continued in heaven, we must be in heaven to continue the praise.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.

1. It is time to begin to praise: "from this time." Is there not special reason, from long arrears, from present duty, etc.?
2. There is no time for leaving off praise: "and for evermore." None supposable or excusable.

Verse 3. God is to be praised.

1. All the day.
2. All the world over.
3. Publicly in the light.
4. Amidst daily duties.
5. Always—because it is always day somewhere.

Verse 3.

1. Canonical hours abolished.
2. Holy places abolished—since we cannot be always in them.
3. Every time and place consecrated.

Verses 5-6.

1. The greatness of God as viewed from below, ver. 5.
2. The condescension of God as viewed from above, ver. 6.
 - (a) In creation.
 - (b) In the Incarnation.
 - (c) In redemption.—*G. R.*

Verses 5-6. The unparalleled condescension of God.

1. None are so great, and therefore able to stoop so low.
2. None are so good, and therefore so willing to stoop.
3. None are so wise, and therefore so able to "behold" or know the needs of little things.
4. None are infinite, and therefore able to enter into minutiae and sympathize with the smallest grief: Infinity is seen in the minute as truly as in the immense.

Verse 6.

1. The same God rules in heaven and earth.
2. Both spheres are dependent for happiness upon his beholding them.
3. They both enjoy his consideration.
4. All things done in them are equally under his inspection.

Verse 7. The gospel and its special eye to the poor.

Verses 7-8.

1. Where men are? In the dust of sorrow and on the dunghill of sin.
2. Who interferes to help them? He who dwelleth on high.
3. What does he effect for them? "Raiseth, lifteth, setteth among princes, among princes of his people."

Verse 8. Elevation to the peerage of heaven; or, the Royal Family increased.

Verse 9. For mothers' meetings. "A joyful mother of children."

1. It is a joy to be a mother.

2. It is specially so to have living, healthy, obedient children.
3. But best of all to have Christian children. . . . Praise is due to the Lord who gives such blessings.

Verse 9.

1. A household God, or, God in the Household: "He maketh, "etc. Have you children? It is of God. Have you lost children? It is of God. Have you been without children? It is of God.
2. Household worship, or, the God of the Household: "Praise ye the Lord."
 - (a) In the family.
 - (b) For family mercies.—G. R.

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH PSALM

There are Expositions of Psalms 113 and 114 in the Works of John Boys, Dean of Canterbury, 1638; folio edition, pp. 846-861.

Psalm 114

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. This sublime SONG OF THE EXODUS is one and indivisible. True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm. God is spoken of as leading forth his people from Egypt to Canaan, and causing the whole earth to be moved at his coming. Things inanimate are represented as imitating the actions of living creatures when the Lord passes by. They are apostrophised and questioned with marvellous force of language, till one seems to look upon the actual scene. The God of Jacob is exalted as having command over river, sea, and mountain, and causing all nature to pay homage and tribute before his glorious majesty.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *When Israel went out of Egypt.* The song begins with a burst, as if the poetic fury could not be restrained, but overleaped all bounds. The soul elevated and filled with a sense of divine glory cannot wait to fashion a preface, but springs at once into the middle of its theme. Israel emphatically came out of Egypt, out of the population among whom they had been scattered, from under the yoke of bondage, and from under the personal grasp of the king who had made the people into national slaves. Israel came out with a high hand and a stretched out arm, defying all the power of the empire, and making the whole of Egypt to travail with sore anguish, as the chosen nation was as it were born

out of its midst. The house of Jacob from a people of strange language. They had gone down into Egypt as a single family—*"the house of Jacob"*; and, though they had multiplied greatly, they were still so united, and were so fully regarded by God as a single unit, that they are rightly spoken of as the house of Jacob. They were as one man in their willingness to leave Goshen; numerous as they were, not a single individual stayed behind. Unanimity is a pleasing token of the divine presence, and one of its sweetest fruits. One of their inconveniences in Egypt was the difference of languages, which was very great. The Israelites appear to have regarded the Egyptians as stammerers and babblers, since they could not understand them, and they very naturally considered the Egyptians to be barbarians, as they would no doubt often beat them because they did not comprehend their orders. The language of foreign taskmasters is never musical in an exile's ear. How sweet it is to a Christian who has been compelled to hear the filthy conversation of the wicked, when at last he is brought out from their midst to dwell among his own people!

Verse 2. *Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.* The pronoun "*his*" comes in where we should have looked for the name of God; but the poet is so full of thought concerning the Lord that he forgets to mention his name, like the spouse in the Song, who begins, "Let *him* kiss me," or Magdalene when she cried, "Tell me where thou hast laid *him*." From the mention of Judah and Israel certain critics have inferred that this Psalm must have been written after the division of the two kingdoms; but this is only another instance of the extremely slender basis upon which an hypothesis is often built up. Before the formation of the two kingdoms David had said, "Go number Israel and Judah," and this was common parlance, for Uriah the Hittite said, "The ark, and Israel and Judah abide in tents"; so that nothing can be inferred from the use of the two names. No division into two kingdoms can have been intended here, for the poet is speaking of the coming out of Egypt when the people were so united that he has just before called them *"the house of Jacob."* It would be quite as fair to prove from the first verse that the Psalm was written when the people were in union as to prove from the second that its authorship dates from their separation. Judah was the tribe which led the way in the wilderness march, and it was foreseen in prophecy to be the royal tribe, hence its poetical mention in this place. The meaning of the passage is that the whole people at the coming out of Egypt were separated unto the Lord to be a peculiar people, a nation of priests whose motto should be, "Holiness unto the Lord." Judah was the Lord's "holy thing," set apart for his special use. The nation was peculiarly Jehovah's dominion, for it was governed by a theocracy in which God alone was King. It was his domain in a sense in which the rest of the world was outside his kingdom. These were the young days of Israel, the time of her espousals, when she went after the Lord into the wilderness, her God leading the way with signs and miracles. The whole people were the shrine of Deity, and their camp was one great temple. What a change there must have been for the godly amongst them from the idolatries and blasphemies of the Egyptians to the holy worship and righteous

rule of the great King in Jeshurun. They lived in a world of wonders, where God was seen in the wondrous bread they ate and in the water they drank, as well as in the solemn worship of his holy place. When the Lord is manifestly present in a church, and his gracious rule obediently owned, what a golden age has come, and what honourable privileges his people enjoy! May it be so among us.

Verse 4. *The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.* At the coming of the Lord to Mount Sinai, the hills moved; either leaping for joy in the presence of their Creator like young lambs; or, if you will, springing from their places in affright at the terrible majesty of Jehovah, and flying like a flock of sheep when alarmed. Men fear the mountains, but the mountains tremble before the Lord. Sheep and lambs move lightly in the meadows; but the hills, which we are wont to call eternal, were as readily made to move as the most active creatures. Rams in their strength, and lambs in their play, are not more stirred than were the solid hills when Jehovah marched by. Nothing is immovable but God himself: the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace abideth fast for ever and ever. Even thus do mountains of sin and hills of trouble move when the Lord comes forth to lead his people to their eternal Canaan. Let us never fear, but rather let our faith say unto this mountain, "Be thou removed hence and cast into the sea, "and it shall be done.

Verse 5. What ailed thee, O thou sea? Wert thou terribly afraid? Did thy strength fail thee? Did thy very heart dry up? What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou wert neighbour to the power of Pharaoh, but thou didst never fear his hosts; stormy wind could never prevail against thee so as to divide thee in twain; but when the way of the Lord was in thy great waters thou was seized with affright, and thou becamest a fugitive from before him. Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? What ailed thee, O quick descending river? Thy fountains had not dried up, neither had a chasm opened to engulf thee! The near approach of Israel and her God sufficed to make thee retrace thy steps. What aileth all our enemies that they fly when the Lord is on our side? What aileth hell itself that it is utterly routed when Jesus lifts up a standard against it? "Fear took hold upon them there, "for fear of HIM the stoutest hearted did quake, and became as dead men.

Verse 6. *Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?* What ailed ye, that ye were thus moved? There is but one reply: the majesty of God made you to leap. A gracious mind will chide human nature for its strange insensibility, when the sea and the river, the mountains and the hills, are all sensitive to the presence of God. Man is endowed with reason and intelligence, and yet he sees unmoved that which the material creation beholds with fear. God has come nearer to us than ever he did to Sinai, or to Jordan, for he has assumed our nature, and yet the mass of mankind are neither driven back from their sins, nor moved in the paths of obedience.

Verse 7. *Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.* Or "from before the Lord, the Adonai, the Master and King." Very fitly does the Psalm call upon all nature again to feel a holy awe because its Ruler is still in its midst.

"Quake when Jehovah walks abroad,
Quake earth, at sight of Israel's God."

Let the believer feel that God is near, and he will serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Awe is not cast out by faith, but the rather it becomes deeper and more profound. The Lord is most revered where he is most loved.

Verse 8. Which turned the rock into a standing water, causing a mere or lake to stand at its foot, making the wilderness a pool: so abundant was the supply of water from the rock that it remained like water in a reservoir. The flint into a fountain of waters, which flowed freely in streams, following the tribes in their devious marches. Behold what God can do! It seemed impossible that the flinty rock should become a fountain; but he speaks, and it is done. Not only do mountains move, but rocks yield rivers when the God of Israel wills that it should be so.

"From stone and solid rock he brings
The spreading lake, the gushing springs."

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together, " for he it is and he alone who doeth such wonders as these. He supplies our temporal needs from sources of the most unlikely kind, and never suffers the stream of his liberality to fail. As for our spiritual necessities they are all met by the water and the blood which gushed of old from the riven rock, Christ Jesus: therefore let us extol the Lord our God. Our deliverance from under the yoke of sin is strikingly typified in the going up of Israel from Egypt, and so also was the victory of our Lord over the powers of death and hell. The Exodus should therefore be earnestly remembered by Christian hearts. Did not Moses on the mount of transfiguration speak to our Lord of "the exodus" which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem; and is it not written of the hosts above that they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb? Do we not ourselves expect another coming of the Lord, when before his face heaven and earth shall flee away and there shall be no more sea? We join then with the singers around the Passover table and make their Hallel ours, for we too have been led out of bondage and guided like a flock through a desert land, wherein the Lord supplies our wants with heavenly manna and water from the Rock of ages. Praise ye the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The 114th psalm appears to me to be an admirable ode, and I began to turn it into our own language. As I was describing the journey of Israel from Egypt, and added the Divine Presence amongst them, I perceived a beauty in this psalm, which was entirely new to me, and which I was going to lose; and that is, that the poet utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun go without a substantive, than he will so much as mention anything of divinity there. "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion" or kingdom. The reason

now seems evident, and this conduct necessary; for, if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards; and then with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once in all his majesty. This is what I have attempted to imitate in a translation without paraphrase, and to preserve what I could of the spirit of the sacred author.

When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,
Left the proud tyrant and his land,
The tribes with cheerful homage own
Their King, and Judah was his throne.
Across the deep their journey lay,
The deep divides to make them way;
The streams of Jordan saw, and fled
With backward current to their head.
The mountains shook like frightened sheep,
Like lambs the little hillocks leap;
Not Sinai on her base could stand,
Conscious of sovereign power at hand.
What power could make the deep divide?
Make Jordan backward roll his tide?
Why did ye leap, ye little hills?
And whence the fright that Sinai feels?
Let every mountain, and every flood,
Retire, and know the approaching God,
The King of Israel! see him here:
Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.
He thunders—and all nature mourns;
The rock to standing pools he turns;
Flints spring with fountains at his word,
And fires and seas confess their Lord.

—Isaac Watts, in *"The Spectator,"* 1712.

Verse 1. *When Israel went out of Egypt.* Out of the midst of that nation, that is, out of the bowels of the Egyptians, who had, as it were, devoured them; thus the Jew doctors gloss upon this text.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *Israel went out of Egypt.* This was an emblem of the Lord's people in effectual vocation,

coming out of bondage into liberty, out of darkness into light, out of superstition, and idolatry, and profaneness, to the service of the true God in righteousness and true holiness; and from a people of strange language to those that speak the language of Canaan, a pure language, in which they can understand one another when they converse together, either about experience or doctrine; and the manner of their coming out is much the same, by strength of hand, by the power of divine grace, yet willingly and cheerfully, with great riches, the riches of grace, and a title to the riches of glory, and with much spiritual strength; for though weak in themselves, yet they are strong in Christ.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1. *The house of Jacob.* The Israelites though they were a great number when they went forth from Egypt, nevertheless formed one house or family; thus the church at the present time dispersed throughout the whole world is called one house: 1Ti 3:15 Heb 3:6; 1Pe 2:5: and that because of one faith, one God, one Father, one baptism, Eph 4:5.—*Marloratus.*

Verse 1. *A people of strange language.* When we find in verse 1, as in Psalm 81:5, Egypt spoken of as a land where the people were of a "strange tongue," it seems likely that the reference is to their being a people who could not speak of God, as Israel could; even as Zep 3:9 tells of the "pure lip," viz., the lip that calls on the name of the Lord.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1. *A people of strange tongue.* Mant translates this "tyrant land," and has the following note: The Hebrew word here rendered "tyrant," has been supposed to signify "barbarous"; that is, "using a barbarous or foreign language or pronunciation." But, says Parkhurst, the word seems rather to refer to the "violence" of the Egyptians towards the Israelites, or "the barbarity of their behaviour," which was more to the Psalmist's purpose than "the barbarity of their language"; even supposing the reality of the latter in the time of Moses. The epithet "barbarous" would leave the same ambiguity as Parkhurst supposes to belong to the text. Bishop Horsley renders "a tyrannical people."

Verse 1. *A people of strange language.* The strange language is evidently an annoyance. Israel could not feel at home in Egypt.—*Justus Olshausen.*

Verse 2. *Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.* These people were God's sanctification and dominion, that is, witnesses of his holy majesty in adopting them, and of his mighty power in delivering them: or, his sanctification, as having his holy priests to govern them in the points of piety; and dominion, as having godly magistrates ordained from above to rule them in matters of policy: or, his sanctuary, both actually, because sanctifying him; and passively, because sanctified of him... This one verse expounds and exemplifies two prime petitions of the Lord's Prayer. "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come": for Judah was God's sanctuary, because hallowing his name; and Israel his dominion, as desiring his kingdom to come. Let every man examine himself by this pattern, whether he be truly the servant of Jesus his Saviour, or the vassal of Satan the destroyer. If any man submit himself willingly to the domineering of the devil, and suffer sin to reign in his mortal members, obeying the lusts thereof, and working all uncleanness even with greediness; assuredly that man is

yet a chapel of Satan, and a slave to sin. On the contrary, whosoever unfeignedly desires that God's kingdom may come, being ever ready to be ruled according to his holy word, acknowledging it a lantern to his feet, and a guide to his paths; admitting obediently his laws, and submitting himself alway to the same; what is he, but a citizen of heaven, a subject of God, a saint, a sanctuary?—*John Boys*.

Verse 2. *Judah was his sanctuary*, etc. Reader, do not fail to remark, when Israel was brought out of Egypt the Lord set up his tabernacle among them, and manifested his presence to them. And what is it now, when the Lord Jesus brings out his people from the Egypt of the world? Doth he not fulfil that sweet promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? Is it not the privilege of his people, to live *to* him, to live *with* him, and to live *upon* him? Doth he not in every act declare, "I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God"? Mt 28:20; Zec 13:9.—*Robert Hawker*.

Verse 2. *Judah was his sanctuary*. Meaning not the tribe of Judah only, though they in many things had the preeminence; the kingdom belonged to it, the chief ruler being out of it, especially the Messiah; its standard was pitched and moved first; it offered first to the service of the Lord; and the Jews have a tradition, mentioned by Jarchi and Kimchi, that this tribe with its prince at the head of it, went into the Red Sea first: the others fearing, but afterwards followed, encouraged by their example. In this place all the tribes are meant, the whole body of the people.—*John Gill*.

Verse 2. One peculiarity of the second verse requires attention. It twice uses the word "*his*", without naming any one. There are two theories to account for this circumstance. One is that Psalm 114 was always sung in immediate connection with 113, in which the name of God occurs no less than six times, so that the continuance of the train of thought made a fresh repetition of it here unnecessary. But this view, to be fully consistent with itself, must assume that the two Psalms are really one, with a merely arbitrary division, which does not, on the face of the matter, seem by any means probable, as the scope of thought in the two is perfectly distinct. The other, which is more satisfactory, regards the omission of the Holy Name in this part of the Psalm as a practical artifice to heighten the effect of the answer to the sudden apostrophe in verses five and six. There would be nothing marvellous in the agitation of the sea, and river, and mountains in the presence of God, but it may well appear wonderful till that potent cause is revealed, as it is most forcibly in the dignified words of the seventh verse.—*Ewald and Perowne, in Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 3. *The sea saw it*: to wit this glorious work of God in bringing his people out of Egypt.—*Matthew Pool*.

Verse 3. *The sea saw it*. Saw there that "Judah" was "God's sanctuary, ""and Israel his dominion, "and therefore "*fled*"; for nothing could be more awful. It was this that *drove Jordan back*, and was an invincible dam to his streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them, they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the

word.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3. *The sea saw it, and fled.*

The waves on either side
Unloose their close embraces, and divide,
And backwards press, as in some solemn show
The crowding people do,
(Though just before no space was seen,)
To let the admired triumph pass between.
The wondering army saw on either hand,
The no less wondering waves like rocks of crystal stand.
They marched betwixt, and boldly trod
The secret paths of God. *Abraham Cowley, 1618-1667.*

Verse 3. *Jordan was driven back.* And now the glorious day was come when, by a stupendous miracle, Jehovah had determined to show how able he was to remove every obstacle in the way of his people, and to subdue every enemy before their face. By his appointment, the host, amounting probably to two millions and a half of persons (about the same number as had crossed the Red Sea on foot), had removed to the banks of the river three days before, and now in marching array awaited the signal to cross the stream. At any time the passage of the river by such a multitude, with their women and children, their flocks and herds, and all their baggage, would have presented formidable difficulties; but now the channel was filled with a deep and impetuous torrent, which overflowed its banks and spread widely on each side, probably extending nearly a mile in width; while in the very sight of the scene were the Canaanitish hosts, who might be expected to pour out from their gates, and exterminate the invading multitude before they could reach the shore. Yet these difficulties were nothing to Almighty power, and only served to heighten the effect of the stupendous miracle about to be wrought.

By the command of Jehovah, the priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, the sacred symbol of the Divine presence, marched more than half a mile in front of the people, who were forbidden to come any nearer to it. Thus it was manifest that Jehovah needed not protection from Israel, but was their guard and guide, since the unarmed priests feared not to separate themselves from the host, and to venture with the ark into the river in the face of their enemies. And thus the army, standing aloof, had a better opportunity of seeing the wondrous results, and of admiring the mighty power of God exerted on their behalf; for no sooner had the feet of the priests touched the brim of the overflowing river, than the swelling waters receded from them; and not only the broad lower valley, but even the deep bed of the stream was presently emptied of water, and its pebbly bottom became dry. The waters which had been in the channel speedily ran off, and were lost in the Dead Sea; whilst those which would

naturally have replaced them from above, were miraculously suspended, and accumulated in a glassy heap far above the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan. These places are supposed to have been at least forty miles above the Dead Sea, and may possibly have been much more; so that nearly the whole channel of the Lower Jordan, from a little below the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, was dry...What a glorious termination of the long pilgrimage of Israel was this! and how worthy of the power, wisdom, and goodness of their Divine Protector! "The passage of this deep and rapid river, " remarks Dr. Hales, "at the most unfavourable season, was more manifestly miraculous, if possible, than that of the Red Sea; because here was no natural agency whatever employed; no mighty wind to sweep a passage, as in the former case; no reflux of the tide, on which minute philosophers might fasten to depreciate the miracle. It seems, therefore, to have been providentially designed to silence cavils respecting the former; and it was done at noonday, in the face of the sun, and in the presence, we may be sure, of the neighbouring inhabitants, and struck terror into the kings of the Canaanites and Amorites westward of the river."—*Philip Henry Gosse, in "Sacred Streams,"* 1877.

Verse 3. *Jordan was driven back.* The waters know their Maker: that Jordan which flowed with full streams when Christ went into it to be baptized, now gives way when the same God must pass through it in state: then there was use of his water, now of his sand. I hear no more news of any rod to strike the waters; the presence of the ark of the Lord God, Lord of all the world, is sign enough to these waves, which now, as if a sinew were broken, run back to their issues, and dare not so much as wet the feet of the priests that bare it. How subservient are all the creatures to the God that made them! How glorious a God do we serve; whom all the powers of the heavens and elements are willingly subject unto, and gladly take that nature which he pleaseth to give them.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 3. *Jordan was driven back.* It was probably at the point near the present southern fords, crossed at the time of the Christian era by a bridge. The river was at its usual state of flood at the spring of the year, so as to fill the whole of the bed, up to the margin of the jungle with which the river banks are lined. On the broken edge of the swollen stream, the band of priests stood with the ark on their shoulders. At the distance of nearly a mile in the rear was the mass of the army. Suddenly the full bed of the Jordan was dried before them. High up the river, "far, far away, ""in Adam, the city which is beside Zaretan, ""as far as the parts of Kirjathjearim" (Jos 3:16), that is, at a distance of thirty miles from the place of the Israelite encampment, the waters there stood which "descended" "from the heights above, "—stood and rose up, as if gathered into a water skin; as if in a barrier or heap, as if congealed; and those that "descended" towards the sea of "the desert, "the Salt Sea, "failed and were cut off." Thus the scene presented is of the "descending stream" (the words employed seem to have a special reference to that peculiar and most significant name of the "Jordan"), not parted asunder, as we generally fancy, but, as the Psalm expresses it, "turned backwards"; the whole bed of

the river left dry from north to south, through its long windings; the huge stones lying bare here and there, imbedded in the soft bottom; or the shingly pebbles drifted along the course of the channel.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanly, in "The History of the Jewish Church," 1870.*

Verse 4. *The mountains skipped like rams*, etc. The figure drawn from the lambs and rams would appear to be inferior to the magnitude of the subject. But it was the prophet's intention to express in the homeliest way the incredible manner in which God, on these occasions, displayed his power. The stability of the earth being, as it were, founded on the mountains, what connection can they have with rams and lambs, that they should be agitated, skipping hither and thither? In speaking in this homely style, he does not mean to detract from the greatness of the miracle, but more forcibly to engrave these extraordinary tokens of God's power on the illiterate.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4. *Skipped.* A poetic description of the concussion caused by the thunder and lightning that accompanied the divine presence.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verse 4. At the giving of the law at Sinai, Horeb and the mountains around, both great and small, shook with a sudden and mighty earthquake, like rams leaping in a grassy plain, with the young sheep frisking round them.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verses 4-6. When Christ descends upon the soul in the work of conversion, what strength doth he put forth! The strongholds of sin are battered down, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ is brought into captivity to the obedience of his sceptre, 2Co 10:4-5. Devils are cast out of the possession which they have kept for many years without the least disturbance. Strong lusts are mortified and the very constitution of the soul is changed. *What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams?*, etc. The prophet speaks those words of the powerful entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan. The like is done by Christ in the conversion of a sinner. Jordan is driven back, the whole course of the soul is altered, the mountains skip like rams. There are many mountains in the soul of a sinner, as pride, unbelief, self conceitedness, atheism, profaneness, etc. These mountains are plucked up by the roots in a moment when Christ begins the work of conversion.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 5.

Fly where thou wilt, O Sea!
And Jordan's current cease!
Jordan, there is no need of thee,
For at God's word, whenever he please,
The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.

—*Abraham Cowley.*

Verses 5-6. A singular animation and an almost dramatic force are given to the poem by the beautiful apostrophe in verses 5, 6, and the effect of this is heightened in a remarkable degree by the use of

the present tenses. The awe and the trembling of nature are a spectacle on which the poet is looking. The parted sea through which Israel walks as on dry land, the rushing Jordan arrested in its course, the granite cliffs of Sinai shaken to their base—he sees it all, and asks in wonder what it means?—*J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verses 5-6. This questioning teaches us that we should ourselves consider and inquire concerning the reason of those things, which we see to have been done in a wondrous way, out of the course of nature. There are signs in the sun, moon, stars, heaven, etc., concerning which Christ has spoken. Let us inquire the reason why they are, that we be not stupid and inaccurate spectators. The things which are done miraculously do speak: and they can give answer why they are done. Nay, rather, portents, signs, earthquakes, extraordinary appearances are loud speaking, and they declare from themselves what they are: namely, that they are prophetic of the anger and future vengeance of God. Such inquiry as this is not prying curiosity, but is pious and useful, working to this end, that we become observant of the judgments of God, with which he visits this world, and yield ourselves to his grace, and so we escape the coming vengeance.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verses 5-6.

What ails thee, sea, to part,
Thee Jordan, back to start?
Ye mountains, like the rams to leap,
Ye little hills, like sheep?—*John Keble*.

Verse 7. *Tremble, thou earth.* Hebrew, *Be in pain*, as a travailing woman: for if the giving of the law had such dreadful effects, what should the breaking thereof have?—*John Trapp*.

Verse 7.

"At the presence of the Lord be in pangs, O earth." "Lord," *Adon*, the Sovereign Ruler. "Pangs," *Chuli*: Mic 4:10. The convulsions of nature, which accompanied the Exodus, were as the birth throes of the Israelite people. "A nation was born in a day." But the deliverance out of Babylon was the prelude to a far more wondrous truth; that of him, in whom human nature was to be regenerated.—*William Kay*.

Verses 7-8. *Tremble*, etc. This is an answer to the preceding question: as if he had said, It is no wonder that Sinai, and Horeb, and a few adjoining hills should thus tremble at the majestic presence of God; for the whole earth must do so, whenever he pleases.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 8. *Which turned the rock into a standing water. Into a pool.* The divine poet represents the very substance of the rock as being converted into water, not literally, but poetically; thus ornamenting his sketch of the wondrous power displayed on this occasion.—*William Walford*.

Verse 8. The remarkable rock in Sinai which tradition regards as the one which Moses smote, is at least well chosen in regard to its situation, whatever opinion we may form of the truth of that tradition, which it seems to be the disposition of late travellers to regard with more respect than was formerly

entertained. It is an isolated mass of granite, nearly twenty feet square and high, with its base concealed in the earth—we are left to conjecture to what depth. In the face of the rock are a number of horizontal fissures, at unequal distances from each other; some near the top, and others at a little distance from the surface of the ground. An American traveller (Dr. Olin) says: "The colour and whole appearance of the rock are such that, if seen elsewhere, and disconnected from all traditions, no one would hesitate to believe that they had been produced by water flowing from these fissures. I think it would be extremely difficult to form these fissures or produce these appearances by art. It is not less difficult to believe that a natural fountain should flow at the height of a dozen feet out of the face of an isolated rock. Believing, as I do, that the water was brought out of a rock belonging to this mountain, I can see nothing incredible in the opinion that this is the identical rock, and that these fissures, and the other appearances, should be regarded as evidences of the fact."—*John Kitto*.

Verse 8. Shall the hard rock be turned into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well? and shall not our hard and flinty hearts, in consideration of our own miseries, and God's unspeakable mercies in delivering us from evil, (if not gush forth into fountains of tears) express so much as a little standing water in our eyes? It is our hard heart indeed, *quod nec compunctione scinditur, nec pietate mollitur, nec movetur precibus, minis non cedit, flagellis duratur*, etc. (Bernard). O Lord, touch thou the mountains and they shall smoke, touch our lips with a coal from thine altar, and our mouth shall show forth thy praise. Smite, Lord, our flinty hearts as hard as the nether millstone, with the hammer of thy word, and mollify them also with the drops of thy mercies and dew of thy Spirit; make them humble, fleshy, flexible, circumcised, soft, obedient, new, clean, broken, and then "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise." Ps 51:17. "O Lord my God, give me grace from the very bottom of my heart to desire thee; in desiring, to seek thee; in seeking, to find; in finding, to love thee; in loving, utterly to loathe my former wickedness; "that living in thy fear, and dying in thy favour, when I have passed through this Egypt and wilderness of this world, I may possess the heavenly Canaan and happy land of promise, prepared for all such as love thy coming, even for every Christian one, which is thy *dominion*, and *sanctuary*. (Augustine).—*John Boys*.

Verse 8. The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel (Ex 14:22), turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel. As they were protected, so they were provided for, by miracles, standing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters, into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, "and that rock was Christ, "1Co 10:4. For he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 8. *The flint into a fountain of waters.* The causing of water to gush forth out of the flinty rock is a practical proof of unlimited omnipotence and of the grace which converts death into life. Let the earth then tremble before the Lord, the God of Jacob. It has already trembled before him, and before him let it tremble. For that which he has been he still ever is; and as he came once he will come

again.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 1-2. The time of first delivery from sin a season notable for the peculiar presence of God.

Verses 1-2. The Lord was to his people—

1. A deliverer.
2. A priest—"his sanctuary."
3. A king—"his dominion."

Verses 1, 7. "The house of Jacob" and "the God of Jacob," the relation between the two.

Verse 2. The church the temple of sanctity and the domain of obedience.

Verse 3. *The sea saw it, and fled;* or rather, "The sea saw and fled"—it saw God and all his people following his lead, and it was struck with awe and fled away. A bold figure! The Red Sea mirrored the hosts which had come down to its shore, and reflected the cloud which towered high over all, as the symbol of the presence of the Lord: never had such a scene been imaged upon the surface of the Red Sea, or any other sea, before. It could not endure the unusual and astounding sight, and fleeing to the right and to the left, opened a passage for the elect people. A like miracle happened at the end of the great march of Israel, for "*Jordan, was driven back.*" This was a swiftly flowing river, pouring itself down a steep decline, and it was not merely divided, but its current was driven back so that the rapid torrent, contrary to nature, flowed uphill. This was God's work: the poet does not sing of the suspension of natural laws, or of a singular phenomenon not readily to be explained; but to him the presence of God with his people is everything, and in his lofty song he tells how the river was driven back because the Lord was there. In this case poetry is nothing but the literal fact, and the fiction lies on the side of the atheistic critics who will suggest any explanation of the miracle rather than admit that the Lord made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all his people. The division of the sea and the drying up of the river are placed together though forty years intervened, because they were the opening and closing scenes of one great event. We may thus unite by faith our new birth and our departure out of the world into the promised inheritance, for the God who led us out of the Egypt of our bondage under sin will also conduct us through the Jordan of death out of our wilderness wanderings in the desert of this tried and changeful life. It is all one and the same deliverance, and the beginning ensures the end.

Verse 3. The impenitence of sinners rebuked by the inanimate creation.

Verse 3. *Jordan was driven back,* or death overcome.

Verse 4. The movableness of things which appear to be fixed and settled. God's power of creating a stir in lethargic minds, among ancient systems, and prejudiced persons of the highest rank.

Verses 7-8. Holy awe.

1. Should be caused by the fact of the divine presence.
2. Should be increased by his covenant character—"the God of Jacob."
3. Should culminate when we see displays of his grace towards his people—"which turned, "etc.
4. Should become universal.

Verse 8. Wonders akin to the miracle at the rock.

1. Christ's death the source of life.
2. Adversity a means of prosperity.
3. Hard hearts made penitent.
4. Barrenness of soul turned into abundance.

Verse 8. Divine supplies.

1. Sure—for he will fetch them even from a rock.
2. Plentiful—"a mere or standing water."
3. Continual "fountain of waters."
4. Instructive. Should create in us holy awe at the power, etc., of the Lord.

Psalm 115

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

SUBJECT. In the former psalm the past wonders which God had wrought were recounted to his honour, and in the present psalm he is entreated to glorify himself again, because the heathen were presuming upon the absence of miracles, were altogether denying the miracles of former ages, and insulting the people of God with the question, "Where is now their God?" It grieved the heart of the godly that Jehovah should be thus dishonoured, and treating their own condition of reproach as unworthy of notice, they beseech the Lord at least to vindicate his own name. The Psalmist is evidently indignant that the worshippers of foolish idols should be able to put such a taunting question to the people who worshipped the only living and true God; and having spent his indignation in sarcasm upon the images and their makers, he proceeds to exhort the house of Israel to trust in God and bless his name. As those who were dead and gone could no longer sing psalms unto the Lord among the sons of men, he exhorts the faithful who were then living to take care that God is not robbed of his praise, and then he closes with an exulting Hallelujah. Should not living men extol the living God?

DIVISION. For the better expounding of it, the psalm may be divided into an entreaty of God to vindicate his own honour, verses 1, 2; a contemptuous description of the false gods and their

worshippers, 3-8; an exhortation to the faithful to trust in God and to expect great blessings from him, 9-15; an explanation of God's relationship to their present condition of things, verse 16; and a reminder, that, not the dead, but the living, must continually praise God here below.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. It will be well to remember that this psalm was sung at the Passover, and therefore it bears relationship to the deliverance from Egypt. The burden of it, seems to be a prayer that the living God, who had been so glorious at the Red Sea and at the Jordan, should again for his own name's sake display the wonders of his power. Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. The people undoubtedly wished for relief from the contemptuous insults of idolaters, but their main desire was that Jehovah himself should no longer be the object of heathen insults. The saddest part of all their trouble was that their God was no longer feared and dreaded by their adversaries. When Israel marched into Canaan, a terror was upon all the people round about, because of Jehovah, the mighty God; but this dread the nations had shaken off since there had been of late no remarkable display of miraculous power. Therefore Israel cried unto her God that he would again make bare his arm as in the day when he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. The prayer is evidently tinged with a consciousness of unworthiness; because of their past unfaithfulness they hardly dared to appeal to the covenant, and to ask blessings for themselves, but they fell back upon the honour of the Lord their God—an old style of argument which their great lawgiver, Moses, had used with such effect when he pleaded, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people." Joshua also used the like argument when he said, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" In such manner also let us pray when no other plea is available because of our sense of sin; for the Lord is always jealous of his honour, and will work for his name's sake when no other motive will move him.

The repetition of the words, *Not unto us*, would seem to indicate a very serious desire to renounce any glory which they might at any time have proudly appropriated to themselves, and it also sets forth the vehemence of their wish that God would at any cost to them magnify his own name. They loathed the idea of seeking their own glory, and rejected the thought with the utmost detestation; again and again disclaiming any self glorifying motive in their supplication. For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. These attributes seemed most in jeopardy. How could the heathen think Jehovah to be a merciful God if he gave his people over to the hands of their enemies? How could they believe him to be faithful and true if, after all his solemn covenant engagements, he utterly rejected his chosen nation? God is very jealous of the two glorious attributes of grace and truth, and the plea that these may not be dishonoured has great weight with him. In these times, when the first victories of the

gospel are only remembered as histories of a dim and distant past, sceptics are apt to boast that the gospel has lost its youthful strength, and they even presume to cast a slur upon the name of God himself. We may therefore rightly entreat the divine interposition that the apparent blot may be removed from his escutcheon, and that his own word may shine forth gloriously as in the days of old. We may not desire the triumph of our opinions, for our own sakes, or for the honour of a sect, but we may confidently pray for the triumph of truth, that God himself may be honoured.

Verse 2. *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?* Or, more literally, "Where, pray, is their God?" Why should the nations be allowed with a sneer of contempt to question the existence, and mercy, and faithfulness of Jehovah? They are always ready to blaspheme; we may well pray that they may not derive a reason for so doing from the course of providence, or the decline of the church. When they see the godly down trodden while they themselves live at ease, and act the part of persecutors, they are very apt to speak as if they had triumphed over God himself, or as if he had altogether left the field of action and deserted his saints. When the prayers and tears of the godly seem to be unregarded, and their miseries are rather increased than assuaged, then do the wicked multiply their taunts and jeers, and even argue that their own wretched irreligion is better than the faith of Christians, because for the present their condition is so much preferable to that of the afflicted saints. And, truly, this is the very sting of the trials of God's chosen when they see the veracity of the Lord questioned, and the name of God profaned because of their sufferings. If they could hope that some good result would come out of all this they would endure it with patience; but as they are unable to perceive any desirable result consequent thereon, they enquire with holy anxiety. "Wherefore should the heathen be permitted to speak thus?" It is a question to which it would be hard to reply, and yet no doubt there is an answer. Sometimes the nations are permitted thus to blaspheme, in order that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity, and in order that the subsequent interposition of God may be rendered the more illustrious in contrast with their profane boastings. Do they say, "*Where is now their God?*" They shall know by and by, for it is written, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries"; they shall know it also when the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Do they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" That coming shall be speedy and terrible to them. In our own case, by our own lukewarmness and the neglect of faithful gospel preaching, we have permitted the uprise and spread of modern doubt, and we are bound to confess it with deep sorrow of soul; yet we may not therefore lose heart, but may still plead with God to save his own truth and grace from the contempt of men of the world. Our honour and the honour of the church are small matters, but the glory of God is the jewel of the universe, of which all else is but the setting; and we may come to the Lord and plead his jealousy for his name, being well assured that he will not suffer that name to be dishonoured. Wherefore should the pretended wise men of the period be permitted to say that they doubt the personality of God? Wherefore should they

say that answers to prayer are pious delusions, and that the resurrection and the deity of our Lord Jesus are moot points? Wherefore should they be permitted to speak disparagingly of atonement by blood and by price, and reject utterly the doctrine of the wrath of God against sin, even that wrath which burneth for ever and ever? They speak exceeding proudly, and only God can stop their arrogant blusterings: let us by extraordinary intercession prevail upon him to interpose, by giving to his gospel such a triumphant vindication as shall utterly silence the perverse opposition of ungodly men.

Verse 3. *But our God is in the heavens*—where he should be; above the reach of mortal sneers, over hearing all the vain jangling of men, but looking down with silent scorn upon the makers of the babel. Supreme above all opposing powers, the Lord reigneth upon a throne high and lifted up. Incomprehensible in essence, he rises above the loftiest thought of the wise; absolute in will and infinite in power, he is superior to the limitations which belong to earth and time. This God is *our* God, and we are not ashamed to own him, albeit he may not work miracles at the beck and call of every vain glorious boaster who may choose to challenge him. Once they bade his Son come down from the cross and they would believe in him, now they would have God overstep the ordinary bounds of his providence and come down from heaven to convince them: but other matters occupy his august mind besides the convincement of those who wilfully shut their eyes to the superabundant evidences of his divine power and Godhead, which are all around them. If our God be neither seen nor heard, and is not to be worshipped under any outward symbol, yet is he none the less real and true, for he is where his adversaries can never be—in the heavens, whence he stretches forth his sceptre, and rules with boundless power. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Up till this moment his decrees have been fulfilled, and his eternal purposes accomplished; he has not been asleep, nor oblivious of the affairs of men; he has worked, and he has worked effectually, none have been able to thwart, nor even so much as to hinder him. "Whatsoever he hath pleased": however distasteful to his enemies, the Lord has accomplished all his good pleasure without difficulty; even when his adversaries raved and raged against him they have been compelled to carry out his designs against their will. Even proud Pharaoh, when most defiant of the Lord was but as clay upon the potter's wheel, and the Lord's end and design in him were fully answered. We may well endure the jeering question, "Where is now their God?" while we are perfectly sure that his providence is undisturbed, his throne unshaken, and his purposes unchanged. What he hath done he will yet do, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and at the end of the great drama of human history, the omnipotence of God and his immutability and faithfulness will be more than vindicated to the eternal confusion of his adversaries.

Verse 4. *Their idols are silver and gold*, mere dead inert matter; at the best only made of precious metal, but that metal quite as powerless as the commonest wood or clay. The value of the idol shows

the folly of the maker in wasting his substance, but certainly does not increase the power of the image, since there is no more life in silver and gold than in brass or iron. The work of men's hands. Inasmuch as the maker is always greater than the thing that he has made, these idols are less to be honoured than the artificers, who fashioned them. How irrational that men should adore that which is less than themselves! How strange that a man should think that he can make a god! Can madness go further? Our God is a spirit, and his hands made the heavens and the earth: well may we worship him, and we need not be disturbed at the sneering question of those who are so insane as to refuse to adore the living God, and yet bow their knees before images of their own carving. We may make an application of all this to the times in which we are now living. The god of modern thought is the creation of the thinker himself, evolved out of his own consciousness, or fashioned according to his own notion of what a god should be. Now, it is evident that such a being is no God. It is impossible that there should be a God at all except the God of revelation. A god who can be fashioned by our own thoughts is no more a God than the image manufactured or produced by our own hands. The true God must of necessity be his own revealer. It is clearly impossible that a being who can be excogitated and comprehended by the reason of man should be the infinite and incomprehensible God. Their idols are blinded reason and diseased thought, the product of men's muddled brains, and they will come to nought.

Verse 5. *They have mouths, but they speak not.* The idols cannot utter even the faintest sound, they cannot communicate with their worshippers, they can neither promise nor threaten, command nor console, explain the past nor prophesy the future. If they had no mouths they might not be expected to speak, but having mouths and speaking not, they are mere dumb idols, and not worthy to be compared with the Lord God who thundered at Sinai, who in old time spake by his servants the prophets, and whose voice even now breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. Eyes have they, but they see not. They cannot tell who their worshippers may be or what they offer. Certain idols have had jewels in their eyes more precious than a king's ransom, but they were as blind as the rest of the fraternity. A god who has eyes, and cannot see, is a blind deity; and blindness is a calamity, and not an attribute of godhead. He must be very blind who worships a blind god: we pity a blind man, it is strange to worship a blind image.

Verse 6. *They have ears, but they hear not.* The Psalmist might have pointed to the monstrous ears with which some heathen deities are disfigured,—truly they have ears; but no prayer of their rotaries, though shouted by a million voices, can ever be heard by them. How can gold and silver hear, and how can a rational being address petitions to one who cannot even hear his words? Noses have they, but they smell not. The Psalmist seems to heap together these sentences with something of the grim sardonic spirit of Elijah when he said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." In sacred scorn

he mocks at those who burn sweet spices, and fill their temples with clouds of smoke, all offered to an image whose nose cannot perceive the perfume. He seems to point his finger to every part of the countenance of the image, and thus pours contempt upon the noblest part of the idol, if any part of such a thing can be noble even in the least degree.

Verse 7. *They have hands, but they handle not.* Looking lower down upon the images, the Psalmist says, "They have hands, but they handle not, "they cannot receive that which is handed to them, they cannot grasp the sceptre of power or the sword of vengeance, they can neither distribute benefits nor dispense judgments, and the most trifling act they are utterly unable to perform. An infant's hand excels them in power. Feet have they, but they walk not. They must be lifted into their places or they would never reach their shrines; they must be fastened in their shrines or they would fall; they must be carried or they could never move; they cannot come to the rescue of their friends, nor escape the iconoclasm of their foes. The meanest insect has more power of locomotion than the greatest heathen god. Neither speak they through their throats. They cannot even reach so far as the guttural noise of the lowest order of beasts; neither a grunt, nor a growl, nor a groan, nor so much as a mutter, can come from them. Their priests asserted that the images of the gods upon special occasions uttered hollow sounds, but it was a mere pretence, or a crafty artifice: images of gold or silver are incapable of living sounds. Thus has the Psalmist surveyed the idol from head to foot, looked in its face, and sounded its throat, and he writes it down as utterly contemptible.

Verse 8. *They that make them are like unto them.* Those who make such things for worship are as stupid, senseless, and irrational as the figures they construct. So far as any spiritual life, thought, and judgment are concerned, they are rather the images of men than rational beings. The censure is by no means too severe. Who has not found the words leaping to his lips when he has seen the idols of the Romans? So is every one that trusteth in them. Those who have sunk so low as to be capable of confiding in idols have reached the extreme of folly, and are worthy of as much contempt as their detestable deities. Luther's hard speeches were well deserved by the Papists; they must be mere dolts to worship the rotten relics which are the objects of their veneration. The god of modern thought exceedingly resembles the deities described in this Psalm. Pantheism is wondrously akin to Polytheism, and yet differs very little from Atheism. The god manufactured by our great thinkers is a mere abstraction: he has no eternal purposes, he does not interpose on the behalf of his people, he cares but very little as to how much man sins, for he has given to the initiated "a larger hope" by which the most incorrigible are to be restored. He is what the last set of critics chooses to make him, he has said what they choose to say, and lie will do what they please to prescribe. Let this creed and its devotees alone, and they will work out their own refutation, for as now their god is fashioned like themselves, they will by degrees fashion themselves like their god; and when the principles of justice, law, and order shall have all been effectually sapped we may possibly witness in some form of

socialism, similar to that which is so sadly spreading in Germany, a repetition of the evils which have in former ages befallen nations which have refused the living God, and set up gods of their own.

Verse 9. *O Israel, trust thou in the LORD.* Whatever others do, let the elect of heaven keep fast to the God who chose them. Jehovah is the God of Jacob, let his children prove their loyalty to their God by their confidence in him. Whatever our trouble may be, and however fierce the blasphemous language of our enemies, let us not fear nor falter, but confidently rest in him who is able to vindicate his own honour, and protect his own servants. He is their help and their shield. He is the friend of his servants, both actively and passively, giving them both aid in labour and defence in danger. In the use of the pronoun "their," the Psalmist may have spoken to himself, in a sort of soliloquy: he had given the exhortation, "trust in Jehovah," and then he whispers to himself, "They may well do so, for he is at all times the strength and security of his servants."

Verse 10. *O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD.* You who are nearest to him, trust him most; your very calling is connected with his truth and is meant to declare his glory, therefore never entertain a doubt concerning him, but lead the way in holy confidence. The priests were the leaders, teachers, and exemplars of the people, and therefore above all others they should place an unreserved reliance upon Israel's God. The Psalmist is glad to add that they did so, for he says, He is their help and their shield. It is good to exhort those to faith who have faith: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; ...that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." We may stir up pure minds by way of remembrance, and exhort men to trust in the Lord because we know that they are trusting already.

Verse 11. The next verse is of the same tenor—*Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD,* whether belonging to Israel, or to the house of Aaron, or not, all those who reverence Jehovah are permitted and commanded to confide in him. He is their help and their shield. He does aid and protect all those who worship him in filial fear, to whatever nation they may belong. No doubt these repeated exhortations were rendered necessary by the trying condition in which the children of Israel were found: the sneers of the adversary would assail all the people, they would most bitterly be felt by the priests and ministers, and those who were secret proselytes would groan in secret under the contempt forced upon their religion and their God. All this would be very staggering to faith, and therefore they were bidden again and again and again to trust in Jehovah. This must have been a very pleasant song to households in Babylon, or far away in Persia, when they met together in the night to eat the Paschal supper in a land which knew them not, where they wept as they remembered Zion. We seem to hear them repeating the threefold word, "Trust in Jehovah," men and women and little children singing out their scorn of the dominant idolatry, and declaring their adhesion to the one God of Israel. In the same manner in this day of blasphemy and rebuke it becomes us all to abound in testimonies to the truth of God. The sceptic is loud in his unbelief, let us be equally open in the

avowal of our faith.

Verse 12. *The Lord hath been mindful of us,* or "Jehovah hath remembered us." His past mercies prove that we are on his heart, and though for the present he may afflict us, yet he does not forget us. We have not to put him in remembrance as though he found it hard to recollect his children, but he hath remembered us and therefore he will in future deal well with us. He will bless us. The word "*us*" is supplied by the translators, and is superfluous, the passage should run, *He will bless; he will bless the house of Israel he will bless the house of Aaron.* The repetition of the word "bless" adds great effect to the passage. The Lord has many blessings, each one worthy to be remembered, he blesses and blesses and blesses again. Where he has once bestowed his favour he continues it; his blessing delights to visit the same house very often and to abide where it has once lodged. Blessing does not impoverish the Lord: he has multiplied his mercies in the past, and he will pour them forth thick and threefold in the future. He will have a general blessing for all who fear him, a peculiar blessing for the whole house of Israel, and a double blessing for the sons of Aaron. It is his nature to bless, it is his prerogative to bless, it is his glory to bless, it is his delight to bless; he has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that he will bless and bless and bless without ceasing.

Verse 13. *He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.* So long as a man fears the Lord it matters nothing whether he be prince or peasant, patriarch or pauper, God will assuredly bless him. He supplies the want of every living thing, from the leviathan of the sea to the insect upon a leaf, and he will suffer none of the godly to be forgotten, however small their abilities, or mean their position. This is a sweet cordial for those who are little in faith, and own themselves to be mere babes in the family of grace. There is the same blessing for the least saint as for the greatest; yea, if anything, the "small" shall be first; for as the necessity is the more pressing, the supply shall be the more speedy.

Verse 14. *The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.* Just as in Egypt he multiplied the people exceedingly, so will he increase the number of his saints upon the earth; not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy. Even to the end of the ages the race of true believers shall be continued, and shall increasingly multiply in number and in power. The first blessing upon mankind was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"; and it is this blessing which God now pronounces upon them that fear him. Despite the idols of philosophy and sacramentarianism, the truth shall gather its disciples, and fill the land with its defenders.

Verse 15. *Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.* This is another form of the blessing of Melchizedek: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth"; and upon us through our great Melchizedek this same benediction rests. It is an omnipotent blessing,

conveying to us all that an Almighty God can do, whether in heaven or on earth. This fulness is infinite, and the consolation which it brings is unailing: he that made heaven and earth can give us all things while we dwell below, and bring us safely to his palace above. Happy are the people upon whom such a blessing rests; their portion is infinitely above that of those whose only hope lies in a piece of gilded wood, or an image of sculptured stone.

Verse 16. *The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's.* There he specially reigns, and manifests his greatness and his glory: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. He hath left the world during the present dispensation in a great measure under the power and will of men, so that things are not here below in the same perfect order as the things which are above. It is true the Lord rules over all things by his providence, but yet he allows and permits men to break his laws and persecute his people for the time being, and to set up their dumb idols in opposition to him. The free agency which he gave to his creatures necessitated that in some degree he should restrain his power and suffer the children of men to follow their own devices; yet nevertheless, since he has not vacated heaven, he is still master of earth, and can at any time gather up all the reins into his own hands. Perhaps, however, the passage is meant to have another meaning, viz., that God will increase his people, because he has given the earth to them, and intends that they shall fill it. Man was constituted originally God's vicegerent over the world, and though as yet we see not all things put under him, we see Jesus exalted on high, and in him the children of men shall receive a loftier dominion even on earth than as yet they have known. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace": and our Lord Jesus shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously. All this will reflect the exceeding glory of him who reveals himself personally in heaven, and in the mystical body of Christ below. The earth belongs to the sons of God, and we are bound to subdue it for our Lord Jesus, for he must reign. The Lord hath given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

Verse 17. *The dead praise not the LORD*—So far as this world is concerned. They cannot unite in the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with which the church delights to adore her Lord. The preacher cannot magnify the Lord from his coffin, nor the Christian worker further manifest the power of divine grace by daily activity while he lies in the grave. Neither any that go down into silence. The tomb sends forth no voice; from mouldering bones and flesh consuming worms there arises no sound of gospel ministry nor of gracious song. One by one the singers in the consecrated choir of saints steal away from us, and we miss their music. Thank God, they have gone above to swell the harmonies of the skies, but as far as we are concerned, we have need to sing all the more earnestly because so many songsters have left our choirs.

Verse 18. *But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.* We who are still living will take care that the praises of God shall not fail among the sons of men. Our afflictions and

depressions of spirit shall not cause us to suspend our praises; neither shall old age, and increasing infirmities damp the celestial fires, nay, nor shall even death itself cause us to cease from the delightful occupation. The spiritually dead cannot praise God, but the life within us constrains us to do so. The ungodly may abide in silence, but we will lift up our voices to the praise of Jehovah. Even though for a time he may work no miracle, and we may see no peculiar interposition of his power, yet on the strength of what he has done in ages past we will continue to laud his name "until the day break, and the shadows flee away, "when he shall once more shine forth as the sun to gladden the faces of his children. The present time is auspicious for commencing a life of praise, since today he bids us hear his voice of mercy. "From this time forth" is the suggestion of wisdom, for this duty ought not to be delayed; and it is the dictate of gratitude, for there are pressing reasons for prompt thankfulness. Once begin praising God and we have entered upon an endless service. Even eternity cannot exhaust the reasons why God should be glorified. Praise the Lord, or Hallelujah. Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout "Hallelujah" for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Several manuscripts and editions, also the Septuagint, the Syriac, and many of the old translators join this Psalm to the preceding, and make one of them. But the argument and the arrangement of the two Psalms do not allow of the least doubt as to their original independence of each other. *Justus Olshausen.*

Verse 1. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.* The Psalmist, by this repetition, implies our natural tendency to self idolatry, and to magnifying of ourselves, and the difficulty of cleansing our hearts from these self reflections. If it be angelical to refuse an undue glory stolen from God's throne, Re 12:8-9; it is diabolical to accept and cherish it. "To seek our own glory is not glory, "Pr 25:27. It is vile, and the dishonour of a creature, who, by the law of his creation, is referred to another end. So much as we sacrifice to our own credit, to the dexterity of our hands, or the sagacity of our wit, we detract from God. *Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 1. *Not unto us, but unto thy name give glory,* etc. This is not a doxology, or form of thanksgiving, but a prayer. Not for our safety or welfare, so much as for thy glory, be pleased to deliver us. Not to satisfy our revenge upon our adversaries; not for the establishment of our own interest; but for the glory of thy grace and truth do we seek thine aid, that thou mayest be known to be a God keeping covenant; for mercy and truth are the two pillars of that covenant. It is a great dishonouring of God when anything is sought from him more than himself, or not for himself. Saith Austin, it is but a carnal affection in prayer when men seek self more than God. Self and God are the two things that come in competition. Now there are several sorts of self; there is carnal self, natural

self, spiritual self, and glorified self; above all these God must have the preeminence. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 1. There are many sweet and precious texts of Scripture which are so endeared, and have become so habituated to us, and we to them, that one cannot but think we must carry them with us to heaven, and that they will form not only the theme of our song, but a portion of our blessedness and joy even in that happy home... But if there be one text which more especially belongs to all, and which must, I think, break forth from *every* redeemed one as he enters heaven, and form the unwearied theme of eternity, it is the first verse of this Psalm. I am sure that not one of the Lord's chosen ones on earth, as he reviews the way by which he has been led, as he sees enemy after enemy prostrate before his utter feebleness, and has such thorough evidence and conviction that his weakness is made perfect in the Lord's strength, but must, from the very ground of his heart, say, *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name* be the praise and the glory ascribed. And could we see heaven opened—could we hear its glad and glorious hallelujahs—could we see its innumerable company of angels, and its band of glorified saints, as they cast their crowns before the throne, we should hear as the universal chorus from every lip, *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* I know not why this should not be as gladly and as gratefully the angels' song as the song of the redeemed: they stand not in their own might nor power,—they kept not their first estate through any inherent strength of their own, but, like their feebler brethren of the human race, are equally "kept by the power of God"; and from their ranks, I doubt not, is reechoed the same glorious strain, *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.* Even our blessed Lord, as on that night of sorrow he sung this hymn of praise, could truly say, in that nature which had sinned, and which was to suffer, "Not unto us, "—not unto man, be ascribed the glory of this great salvation, which I am now with my own blood to purchase, but unto thy name and thy love be the praise given. *Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1. *"Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi sit gloria."* A part of the Latin version of this Psalm is frequently sung after grace at public dinners, but why we can hardly imagine, except it be for fear that donors should be proud of the guineas they have promised, or gourmands should be vainglorious under the influence of their mighty feeding. *C.H.S.*

Verses 1-2. He, in a very short space, assigns three reasons why God should seek the glory of his name in preserving his people. First, because he is merciful; secondly, because he is true and faithful in observing his promise; thirdly, that the Gentiles may not see God's people in a state of destitution, and find cause for blaspheming him or them. He therefore says, *for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake, show thy glory, or give glory to thy name, for it is then thy glory will be exhibited when you show mercy to thy people; and then thou wilt have carried out the truth of the promise which thou hast made to our fathers. Lest the Gentiles should say, Where is their God? lest the incredulous Gentiles*

should get an occasion of detracting from thy power, and, perhaps, of ignoring thy very existence.
Robert Bellarmine.

Verses 2-3. If God be everywhere, why doth Christ teach us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven"? And when the heathen made that scoffing demand, *Where is now their God?* why did David answer, *Our God is in the heavens?* To these and all other texts of like import we may answer; *heaven* is not there spoken of as bounding the presence of God, but as guiding the faith and hope of man. "In the morning" (saith David, Ps 5:3) "will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up!" When the eye hath no sight of any help on earth, then faith may have the clearest vision of it in heaven. And while God appears so little in any gracious dispensation for his people on earth, that the enemy begins to scoff, "*Where is now their God?*" when his people have recourse by faith to heaven, where the Lord not only is, but is glorious in his appearing. From whence as he the better seeth how it is with us, so he seems to have a position of advantage for relieving us. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2-8. Contrast Jehovah with any other God. Why should the heathen say, *Where, pray, (ag) is your God?* Take up Moses' brief description in De 4:28, and expand it as is done here. Idols of gold and silver have a *mouth*, but give no counsel to their worshippers; *eyes*, but see not the devotions nor the wants of those who serve them; *ears*, but hear not their cries of distress or songs of praise; *nostrils*, but smell not the fragrant incense presented to their images; *hands*, but the thunderbolt which they seem to hold (as Jupiter Tonans in after days), is a *brutum fulmen*, they cannot launch it; *feet*, but they cannot move to help the fallen. Ah! they cannot so much as whisper one syllable of response, or even mutter in their throat! And as man becomes like his God, (witness Hindu idolaters whose cruelty is just the reflection of the cruelty of their gods,) so these gods of the heathen being "soulless, the worshippers become soulless themselves" (Tholuck). *Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 3. *And our God (is) in heaven; all that he pleased he has done.* The "*and*," though foreign from our idiom, adds sensibly to the force of the expression. They ask thus, as if our God were absent or had no existence; and yet all the while our God is in heaven, in his exalted and glorious dwelling place. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3 (first clause). It would be folly to assert the like concerning idols; therefore, if the heathen say, *Where is your God?* we reply, *He is in heaven, &c.:* but where are your idols? In the earth, not making the earth, but made from the earth, &c. *Martin Geier.*

Verse 3. *But our God is in the heavens.* When they place God in heaven, they do not confine him to a certain locality, nor set limits to his infinite essence; but on the contrary they deny the limitation of his power, its being shut up to human instrumentality only, or its being subject to fate or fortune. In short, they put the universe under his control; and teach us that, being superior to every obstruction, he does freely everything that may seem good to him. This truth is still more plainly asserted in the subsequent clause, *he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.* God then may be said to dwell in

heaven, as the world is subject to his will, and nothing can prevent his accomplishing his purposes.
John Calvin.

Verse 4. *Their idols are silver and gold.* Can there be anything more absurd than to expect assistance from them, since neither the materials of which they are formed, nor the forms which are given them by the hand of men possess the smallest portion of divinity so as to command respect for them? At the same time, the prophet tacitly indicates that the value of the material does not invest the idols with more excellence, so that they deserve to be more highly esteemed. Hence the passage may be translated adversatively, thus, Though they are of gold and silver, yet they are not gods, because they are the work of men's hands. *John Calvin.*

Verse 4. *Their idols are silver, etc.* They are metal, stone, and wood. They are generally made in the form of man, but can neither see, hear, smell, feel, walk, nor speak. How brutish to trust in such! and next to them, in stupidity and inanity, must they be who form them, with the expectation of deriving any good from them. So obviously vain was the whole system of idolatry that the more serious heathens ridiculed it, and it was a butt for the jests of their freethinkers and buffoons. How keen are these words of Juvenal!

Audis,

Jupiter, haec? nec labra moves, cum mittere vocem

Debueras, vel marmoreus vel aeneus? aut cur

In carbone tuo charta pia thura soluta

Ponimus, et sectum vituli jecur, albaque porci

Omenta? ut video, nullum discrimen habendum est

Effigies inter vestras, statuamque Bathylli. Sat. 13, ver. 113.

"Dost thou hear, O Jupiter, these things? nor move thy lips when thou oughtest to speak out, whether thou art of marble or of bronze? Or, why do we put the sacred incense on thy altar from the opened paper, and the extracted liver of a calf, and the white caul of a hog? As far as I can discern, there is no difference between thy statue and that of Bathyllus." This irony will appear the keener, when it is known that Bathyllus was a fiddler and player, whose image, by the order of Polycrates, was erected in the temple of Juno at Samos. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4. *Idols.* Idolaters plead in behalf of their idols, that they are only intended to represent their gods, and to maintain a more abiding sense of their presence. The Spirit, however, does not allow this idea, and treats their images as the very gods they worship. The gods they profess to represent do not really exist, and therefore their worship is altogether vain and foolish. Must not the same lie said of the pretended worship of many in the present day, who would encumber their worship with representative rites and ceremonies, or expressive symbols, or frame to themselves in their imaginations a god other than the God of revelation? *W. Wilson.*

Verse 4. *Silver and gold* proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4. *The work of men's hands.* The following advertisement is copied from a Chinese newspaper:—"Archen Tea Chinchin, sculptor, respectfully acquaints masters of ships, trading from Canton to India, that they may be furnished with figure heads of any size, according to order, at one fourth of the price charged in Europe. He also recommends for private venture, the following idols, brass, gold, and silver: the hawk of Vishnoo, which has reliefs of his incarnation in a fish, boar, lion, and turtle. An Egyptian apis, a golden calf and bull, as worshipped by the pious followers of Zoroaster. Two silver mammosits, with golden earrings; an aprimanes, for Persian worship; a ram, an alligator, a crab, a laughing hyena, with a variety of household gods on a small scale, calculated for family worship. Eighteen months' credit will be given, or a discount of fifteen percent for prompt payment of the sum affixed to each article. Direct. China street, Canton, under the marble Rhinoceros and Gilt Hydra." *Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 4. *The work of men's hands.* Works, and not the makers of works. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4. *The work of men's hands.* And therefore they must needs be goodly gods, when made by bunglers especially, as was the rood of *Cockram*; which if it were not good enough to make a god would make an excellent devil, as the Mayor of Doncaster merrily told the complainants. *John Trapp.*

Verses 4-7. A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the heathen idols. He made everything, they are themselves made by men; he is in heaven, they are upon earth; he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, they can do nothing; he seeth the distresses, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance, and affecteth the salvation of his servants; they are blind, deaf, and dumb, senseless, motionless, and impotent. Equally slow to hear, equally impotent to save, in time of greatest need, will every worldly idol prove, on which men have set their affections, and to which they have, in effect, said, "Thou art my God." *George Horne.*

Verses 4-7. In Alexandria there was a most famous building called the *Sarapion*, a temple of *Serapis*, who presided over the inundations of the Nile, and the fertility of Egypt. It was a vast structure of masonry, crowning a hill in the centre of the city, and was ascended by a hundred steps. It was well fortified and very handsome. The statue of the god was a colossal image, which touched with outstretched hands both sides of the building, while the head reached the lofty roof. It was adorned with rich metals and jewels. The Emperor Theodosius, having commanded the demolition of the heathen temple, Theophilus, the bishop, attended by the soldiers, hastened to ascend the steps and enter the fane. The sight of the image, for a moment, made even the Christian destruction pause. The bishop ordered a soldier to strike without delay. With a hatchet he smote the statue on the knee. All waited in some emotion, but there was neither sound nor sign of divine anger. The soldiers next climbed to the head and struck it off. It rolled on the ground. A large family of rats, disturbed in their tranquil abode within the sacred image, poured out from the trembling statue and raced over the

temple floor. The people now began to laugh, and to destroy with increased zeal. They dragged the fragments of the statue through the streets. Even the Pagans were disgusted with gods who did not defend themselves. The huge edifice was slowly destroyed, and a Christian church was built in its place. There was still some fear among the people that the Nile would show displeasure by refusing its usual inundation. But as the river rose with more than usual fulness and bounty, every anxiety was dispelled. *Andrew Reed, in "The Story of Christianity," 1877.*

Verses 4-8. Theodoret tells us of S. Publia, the aged abbess of a company of nuns at Antioch, who used to chant, as Julian went by in idolatrous procession, the Psalm, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands... They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them"; and he narrates how the angry Emperor caused his soldiers to buffet her till she bled, unable as he was to endure the sting of the old Hebrew song. *Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 5. *Mouths, but they speak not.* The noblest function of the mouth is to speak. Eyes, ears, and nose are the organs of certain senses. The mouth contains the organ of taste, and the hands and feet belong to the organ of touch, but speech is the glory of the mouth. *James G. Murphy.*

Verse 6. *They have ears, but they hear not.* But are as deaf as doornails to the prayers of their suppliants. The Cretians pictured their Jupiter without ears, so little hearing or help they hoped for from him. Socrates, in contempt of heathen gods, swore by an oak, a goat, a dog; as holding these better gods than those. *John Trapp,*

Verse 7. *They have hands, but they handle not.* Even their artist therefore surpasses them, since he had the faculty of moulding them by the motion and functions of his limbs; though thou wouldest be ashamed to worship that artist. Even you surpass them, though thou hast not made these things, since thou doest what they cannot do. *Augustine.*

Verse 7. *Neither speak they through their throat.* *Yehgu;* not so much as the low faint moaning of a dove. Isa 38:14. *William Kay.*

Verse 7. *Speak, or, as the Hebrew word likewise signifies, breathe.* They are not only irrational, but also inanimate. *Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 8. *They that make them are like unto them.* They that make them *images*, show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but they that make them *gods* show their stupidity, and are as senseless blockish things as the idols themselves. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 8. *They that make them are like unto them.* They are like idols, because, though they hear and see, it is more in appearance than in reality; for they neither see nor hear the things that pertain to salvation, the things that only are worth seeing, so that they may be said more to dream than to see or hear; as St. Mark has it, "Having eyes ye see not, having ears ye hear not." *Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 8. *Like unto them.* etc. Every one is just what his God is; whoever serves the Omnipotent is omnipotent with him: whoever exalts feebleness, in stupid delusion, to be his god, is feeble along

with that god. This is an important preservative against fear for those who are sure that they worship the true God. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 8. *Like unto them.* Namely, "hollowness, "vanity, unprofitableness: (*tohu*). Isa 44:9-10. *William Kay.*

Verse 8. They that serve a base god cannot but be of a base spirit, and so can do nothing worthily and generously. Every man's temper is as his god is. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 9. *He is their help.* We should rather have expected, "Our help and our shield, "&c. But the burden thrice introduced, appears to be a well known formula of praise. "*Their*," "i.e.," "of all who trust in him." The verses contain a climax: (1) Israel in general is addressed; (2) the priests or ministers of God's service; (3) the true Israelites; not only chosen out of all people, or out of the chosen people for outward service; but serving God in sincerity of heart. *Speaker's Commentary.*

Verse 10. *He is the help* of his people; they are helpless in themselves, and vain is the help of man, for there is none in him; there is no help but in the Lord, and he is a present, seasonable, and sufficient help. Jehovah the Father has promised them help, and he is both able and faithful to make it good; he has laid help upon his Son for them; and has set up a throne of grace, where they may come for grace to help them in time of need. Christ has helped them out of the miserable estate they were fallen into by sin; he helps them on in their way to heaven, by his power and grace, and at last brings them thither. The Spirit of God helps them to the things of Christ; to many exceeding great and precious promises; and out of many difficulties, snares and temptations; and he helps them in prayer under all their infirmities, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God; and therefore they should trust in the Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit. *John Gill.*

Verse 12. *The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us.* God hath, and therefore God will, is an ordinary Scripture argument. *John Trapp.*

Verse 13. *He will bless... both small and great.* Mercy, according to the covenant of grace, giveth the same grounds of faith and hope to everyone within the church; so that whatever of favour is shown to one of God's people, it is of a general use and profit to others. This Scripture sheweth that as the duty of trusting in the Lord is common to all sorts of persons, so the blessing of trust is common, and doth belong to all sorts of believers, small and great. God's Israel consists of several degrees of men. There are magistrates who have their peculiar service; there are ministers who intercede between God and man in things belonging to God; and there are the common sort of them that fear God, and are admitted to the honour of being his people. Now these have all the same privileges. If God be the help and shield of the one, he will be the help and shield of the other; if he bless the one he will bless the other. Every one that feareth God, and is in the number of the true Israelites, may expect his blessing as well as public persons; the meanest peasant as well as the greatest prince, as they have leave to trust in God, so they may expect his blessing. The reason is that they have all an equal

interest in the same God, who is a God of goodness and power, able and willing to relieve all those that trust in him. He is alike affected to all his children, and beareth them the same love. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 13. He says, *both small and great*, by which circumstance he magnifies God's paternal regard the more, showing that he does not overlook even the meanest and the most despised, provided they cordially seek his aid. Now as there is no acceptance of persons before God, our low and abject condition ought to be no obstruction to our drawing near to him, since he so kindly invites to approach him those who appear to be held in no reputation. The repetition of the word "*bless*" is intended to mark the uninterrupted stream of his lovingkindness. *John Calvin.*

Verse 14. The LORD shall increase you, etc. This is expressive of the further and increasing blessing of Jehovah on his Israel, upon his ministers, and upon the whole church. They are to be increased in light and knowledge, in gifts and graces, in faith and utterance, in numbers and multitude. *Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 14.

The Lord will heap his blessings upon you,
Upon you and your children.

—*William Green, in "A New Translation of the Psalms," 1762.*

Verse 15. *Blessed are ye*, etc. Ye are the people blessed of old in the person of your father Abraham, by Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God, "Creator of heaven and earth," Ge 14:19. "*Of Jehovah,*" literally, *to Jehovah*, as an object of benediction to him. Or the Hebrew proposition, as in many other cases, may be simply equivalent to our *by*. The creative character of God is mentioned, as ensuring his ability, no less than his willingness, to bless his people. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 16. *The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S.* He demonstrates, that, as God has his dwelling place in the heavens, he must be independent of all worldly riches; for, assuredly, neither wine, nor corn, nor anything requisite for the support of the present life, is produced there. Consequently, God has every resource in himself. To this circumstance the repetition of the term "*heavens*" refers. *The heavens, the heavens are enough for God;* and as he is superior to all aid, he is to himself instead of a hundred more. *John Calvin.*

Verse 16. *The earth hath he given*, etc. This verse is full of beauty, when read in connection with what follows, as a descriptive declaration of the effect of "the regeneration" on this lower scene. For until then, man has rather been given to the earth than the earth to the sons of men. It is but a place of graves, and the day of death seems better than the day of birth, so long as men walk in no brighter light than that of the sun. *Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 17. *The dead praise not the LORD*, etc. David considers not here what men do, or do not, in the next world; but he considers only that in this world he was bound to propagate God's truth, and

that he could not do so if God took him away by death. Now there is a double reason given of David's and other holy men's deprecation of death in the Old Testament; one in relation to themselves, *quia promissiones obsurae*, because Moses had conveyed to those men all God's future blessings, all the joy and glory of heaven, only in the types of earthly things, and said little of the state of the soul after this life. And therefore the promises belonging to the godly after this life, were not so clear that in the contemplation of them they could deliver themselves confidently into the jaws of death: he that is not fully satisfied of the next world, makes shift to be content with this. The other reason was *quia operarii pauci*, because God had a great harvest in hand, and few labourers in it, they were loath to be taken from the work; and this reason was not in relation to themselves, but to God's church, since they would not be able to do God's cause any more good here. This was the other reason that made those good men so loath to die. *Quid facies nomini tuo?* says Joshua in his prayer to God. If the Canaanites come in to destroy us, and blaspheme thee, what wilt thou do unto thy mighty name? What wilt thou do unto thy glorious church, said the saints of God under the Old Testament, if thou take those men out of the world, whom thou hast chosen, enabled, and qualified, for the edification, sustanation, and propagation of that church? Upon this account David desired to live, not for his own sake, but for God's glory and his church's good; neither of which could be advanced by him when he was dead. *Abraham Wright.*

Verse 17. *The dead praise not the LORD*, etc. Who are here meant by "*the dead*"? I cannot rest in the view taken by those who consider this verse simply as a plea by those who use it, that they may be saved from death. They are words provided for the church at large, as the subsequent verse proves. By "*the dead*," then, I understand those who descend to the silence of eternal death, who have not praised God, and never can. For them the earth might seem never to have been given. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 17. *Into silence.* Into the grave—the land of silence. Ps 94:17. Nothing is more impressive in regard to the grave than its utter *silence*. Not a voice, not a sound, is heard there,—of birds or men—of song or conversation—of the roaring of the sea, the sighing of the breeze, the fury of the storm, the tumult of battle. Perfect stillness reigns there; and the first sound that shall be heard there will be the archangel's trump. *Albert Barnes.*

Verses 17-18. The *people* of God cannot die, because the praise of God would die with them, which would be impossible. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verses 17-18. It is not to be overlooked that there do occur, in certain Psalms, words which have the appearance of excluding the hope of eternal life (Ps 6:5 30:9 88:10,12 89:47 115:17)... Yet it is a very significant fact, that in all the Psalms in question, there is an earnest solicitude expressed for the glory of God. If death is deprecated, it is in order that the Lord may not lose the glory, nor his church the services which a life prolonged might furnish. This is well exemplified in the hundred and fifteenth,

which I the rather cite because, being the sole exception to the rule, that the dark views of death are found in Psalms of contrition and deep sorrow; it is the only Psalm to which the preceding observations are inapplicable. It is a tranquil hymn of praise.

17. It is not the dead who praise Jah: Neither any that go down into silence.

18. But WE will bless Jah, From this time forth and for evermore. Hallelujah!

The Psalm thus closed, was one of the Songs of the Second Temple. What we hear in it is the voice of the church, rather than of an individual soul. And this may assist us in perceiving its entire harmony with faith in the heavenly glory. It much concerns the honour of God that there be continued, on the earth, a visible church, in which his name may be recorded from generation to generation. That is a work which cannot be performed by the dead. Since, therefore, the uppermost desire of the church ought ever to be that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom advanced, and his will done in the earth; it is her duty to pray for continued subsistence here, on the earth, to witness for God. And it is to be carefully observed, that not only in this passage, but in all the parallel texts in which the Psalmists seem to speak doubtfully or disparagingly of the state of the departed, it is in connection with the interest of God's cause on the earth. The thought that is uppermost in their hearts is, that "in death there is no commemoration" of God—no recording of his name for the salvation of men. This single circumstance might, I think, suffice to put the reader on his guard against a precipitate fastening on them of a meaning which would exclude the hope of eternal life. It goes far to show that what the Psalmist deprecates, is not death simply considered, but premature death. Their prayer is, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Ps 102:24. And I do not hesitate to say that there are men so placed in stations of eminent usefulness, that it is their duty to make the prayer their own. *William Binnie.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The passage may be used as,

1. A powerful plea in prayer.
2. An expression of the true spirit of piety.
3. A safe guide in theology.
4. A practical direction in choosing our way of life.
5. An acceptable spirit when surveying past or present success.

Verse 1.

1. No praise is due to man. Have we a being? Not unto us, etc. Have we health? Not unto us, etc. Have we outward comforts? Not unto us, etc. Friends? Not unto us, etc. The means of grace? Not unto us, etc. Saving faith in Christ? Not unto us, etc. Gifts and graces? Not unto us, etc. The hope of glory? Not unto us, etc. Usefulness to others? Not unto us, etc.

2. All praise is due to God. (a) Because all we have is from mercy. (b) Because all we expect is from faithfulness. *G. R.*

Verse 2. A taunting question, to which we can give many satisfactory replies.

Verse 2. Why do they say so? Why doth God permit them to say so? *Matthew Henry.*

Verses 2-3.

1. The inquiry of heathens: Ps 115:2. (a) Of ignorance. They see a temple but no god. (b) Of reproach to the people of God when their God has forsaken them for a time: "While they say daily unto me, where, "etc.

2. The reply to their inquiry: Ps 115:3. Do you ask where is our God? Ask rather where he is not? Do you ask what he has done? "He has done whatsoever he hath pleased." *G. R.*

Verse 3.

1. His position betokens absolute dominion.

2. His actions prove it.

3. Yet he condescends to be "our God."

Verse 3 (*second clause*). The sovereignty of God. Establish and improve the great scriptural doctrine, that the glorious God has a right to exercise dominion over all his creatures; and to do, in all respects, as he pleases. This right naturally results from his being the *Former* and the *Possessor* of heaven and earth. Consider

1. He is infinitely wise; he perfectly knows all his creatures, all their actions, and all their tendencies.

2. He is infinitely righteous.

3. He is infinitely good. *George Burder.*

Verses 4-8.

1. The character of idol gods. Whether our gods are natural objects or riches or worldly pleasures, they have no eye to pity, no ear to hear petitions, no tongue to counsel, no hand to help.

2. The character of the true God. He is all eye, all ear, all tongue, all hand, all feet, all mind, all heart.

3. The character of the idol worshippers. All become naturally assimilated to the objects of their worship.

Verse 8. The likeness between idolaters and their idols. Work it out in the particulars mentioned.

Verse 9. The living God claims spiritual worship; the life of such worship is faith; faith proves God to be a living reality—"He is their help, "etc. Only elect Israel will ever render this living worship.

Verses 9-11.

1. The reproof. "O Israel!" "O house of Aaron!" "Ye who fear the Lord." Have you been unbelieving towards your God?

2. The correction or admonition. "Trust in the Lord, "Have you trusted in the true God as others have in their false gods?

3. The instruction. "He is their help, "etc. Let churches, ministers, and all who fear God know that at all times and under all circumstances he is their help and their shield. *G. R.*

Verse 10.

1. Those who publicly serve should specially trust. "O house of Aaron, trust."
2. Those who are specially called shall be specially helped. "He is their help."
3. Those who are specially helped in service may be sure of special protection in danger...and their shield.

Verse 11. Filial fear the foundation of fuller faith.

Verse 12. What we have experienced. What we may expect. *Matthew Henry.*

Verses 12-13.

1. What God *has done* for his people: "He hath been mindful of us." (a) Our preservation proves this. (b) Our mercies. (c) Our trials. (d) Our guidance. (e) Our consolations. Everything, even the minutest blessing, represents a thought in the mind of God respecting us. "How precious are thy thoughts concerning me, O God, how great, "etc., and those thoughts go back to an eternity before we came into being. "The Lord hath been mindful of us"; then should we not be more mindful of him?
2. What he *will do* for his people—"He will bless us." (a) Greatly. His blessings are like himself, great. They are blessed whom he blesses. (b) Suitably. The house of Israel, the house of Aaron, all who fear him, according to their need, both small and great. (c) Assuredly. "He will, ""he will, ""he will, ""he will." With one "will" he curses, with four "wills" he blesses. *G. R.*

Verse 13.

1. The general character—"fear the Lord."
2. The degrees of development—"small and great."
3. The common blessing.

Verse 14.

1. Gracious increase—in knowledge, love, power, holiness, usefulness, etc.
2. Growing increase—we grow faster, and advance not only more, but more and more.
3. Relative increase—our children grow in grace through our example, etc.

Verse 14. The blessings of God are,

1. *Ever flowing* "more and more."
2. *Over flowing*—"you and your children." Let parents seek more grace for themselves for the sake of their children. (a) That they may be more influenced by their example. (b) That their prayers may be more prevalent on their behalf. (c) That their children may be more blessed for their sakes. *G. R.*

Verse 15. A blessing.

1. Belonging to a peculiar people—"ye."
2. Coming from a peculiar quarter—"of the Lord, "etc.

3. Bearing a peculiar date—"are."
4. Stamped with peculiar certainty—"Ye are blessed."
5. Involving a peculiar duty—"Bless the Lord now and evermore."

Verse 15. The Creator's blessing—its greatness, fulness, variety, etc.

Verse 16. Man's lordship over the world, its limit, its abuse, its legitimate bound, its grand design.

Verses 17-18.

1. Missing voices—"The dead praise not."
2. Their stimulus upon ourselves—"But we."
3. Their cry to others—"Praise ye the Lord." Let us make up for the silent voices.

Verses 17-18.

1. They who do not praise God here will not praise him hereafter. No reprieve therefore from punishment.

2. They who praise God in this life will praise him for evermore. Hallelujah for this. "Praise the Lord."

G.R.

Verses 17-18. A new year's sermon.

1. A mournful memory—"the dead."
2. A happy resolve—"but we will bless the Lord."
3. An appropriate commencement—"from this time forth."
4. An everlasting continuance—"and for evermore."

Psalm 116

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

SUBJECT. This is a continuation of the Paschal Hallel, and therefore must in some measure be interpreted in connection with the coming out of Egypt. It has all the appearance of being a personal song in which the believing soul, reminded by the Passover of its own bondage and deliverance, speaks thereof with gratitude, and praises the Lord accordingly. We can conceive the Israelite with a staff in his hand singing, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, "as he remembered the going back of the house of Jacob to the land of their fathers; and then drinking the cup at the feast using the words of Ps 116:13, "I will take the cup of salvation." The pious man evidently remembers both his own deliverance and that of his people as he sings in the language of Ps 116:16, "Thou hast loosed my bonds"; but he rises into sympathy with his nation as he thinks of the courts of the Lord's house and

of the glorious city, and pledges himself to sing "in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." Personal love fostered by a personal experience of redemption is the theme of this Psalm, and in it we see the redeemed answered when they pray, preserved in time of trouble, resting in their God, walking at large, sensible of their obligations, conscious that they are not their own but bought with a price, and joining with all the ransomed company to sing hallelujahs unto God.

Since our divine Master sang this hymn, we can hardly err in seeing here words to which he could set his seal,—words in a measure descriptive of his own experience; but upon this we will not enlarge, as in the notes we have indicated how the Psalm has been understood by those who love to find their Lord in every line.

DIVISION. David Dickson has a somewhat singular division of this Psalm, which strikes us as being exceedingly suggestive. He says, "This Psalm is a threefold engagement of the Psalmist unto thanksgiving unto God, for his mercy unto him, and in particular for some notable delivery of him from death, both bodily and spiritual. The first engagement is, that he shall out of love have recourse unto God by prayer, Ps 116:1-2; the reasons and motives whereof are set down, because of his former deliverances, Ps 116:3-8, the second engagement is to a holy conversation, Ps 116:9, and the motives and reasons are given in Ps 116:10-13; the third engagement is to continual praise and service, and specially to pay those vows before the church, which he had made in days of sorrow, the reasons whereof are given in Ps 116:14-19."

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *I love the LORD.* A blessed declaration: every believer ought to be able to declare without the slightest hesitation, "I love the Lord." It was required under the law, but was never produced in the heart of man except by the grace of God, and upon gospel principles. It is a great thing to say "I love the Lord"; for the sweetest of all graces and the surest of all evidences of salvation is love. It is great goodness on the part of God that he condescends to be loved by such poor creatures as we are, and it is a sure proof that he has been at work in our heart when we can say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The Psalmist not only knows that he loves God, but he knows why he does so. When love can justify itself with a reason, it is deep, strong, and abiding. They say that love is blind; but when we love God our affection has its eyes open and can sustain itself with the most rigid logic. We have reason, superabundant reason, for loving the Lord; and so because in this case principle and passion, reason and emotion go together, they make up an admirable state of mind. David's reason for his love was the love of God in hearing his prayers. The Psalmist had used his "voice" in prayer, and the habit of doing so is exceedingly helpful to devotion. If we can pray aloud without being overheard it is well to do so. Sometimes, however, when the Psalmist had lifted up his voice, his utterance had been so

broken and painful that he scarcely dared to call it prayer; words failed him, he could only produce a groaning sound, but the Lord heard his moaning voice. At other times his prayers were more regular and better formed: these he calls "*supplications*." David had praised as best he could, and when one form of devotion failed him he tried another. He had gone to the Lord again and again, hence he uses the plural and says "my supplications," but as often as he had gone, so often had he been welcome. Jehovah had heard, that is to say, accepted, and answered both his broken cries and his more composed and orderly supplications; hence he loved God with all his heart. Answered prayers are silken bonds which bind our hearts to God. When a man's prayers are answered, love is the natural result. According to Alexander, both verbs may be translated in the present, and the text may run thus, "I love because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplications." This also is true in the case of every pleading believer. Continual love flows out of daily answers to prayer.

Verse 2. *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me:*—bowing down from his grandeur to attend to my prayer; the figure seems to be that of a tender physician or loving friend leaning over a sick man whose voice is faint and scarcely audible, so as to catch every accent and whisper. When our prayer is very feeble, so that we ourselves can scarcely hear it, and question whether we do pray or not, yet God bows a listening ear, and regards our supplications. Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live, or "in my days." Throughout all the days of my life I will address my prayer to God alone, and to him I will unceasingly pray. It is always wise to go where we are welcome and are well treated. The word "call" may imply praise as well as prayer: calling upon the name of the Lord is an expressive name for adoration of all kinds. When prayer is heard in our feebleness, and answered in the strength and greatness of God, we are strengthened in the habit of prayer, and confirmed in the resolve to make ceaseless intercession. We should not thank a beggar who informed us that because we had granted his request he would never cease to beg of us, and yet doubtless it is acceptable to God that his petitioners should form the resolution to continue in prayer: this shows the greatness of his goodness, and the abundance of his patience. In all days let us pray and praise the Ancient of days. He promises that as our days our strength shall be; let us resolve that as our days our devotion shall be.

Verse 3. The Psalmist now goes on to describe his condition at the time when he prayed unto God. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* As hunters surround a stag with dogs and men, so that no way of escape is left, so was David enclosed in a ring of deadly griefs. The bands of sorrow, weakness, and terror with which death is accustomed to bind men ere he drags them away to their long captivity were all around him. Nor were these things around him in a distant circle, they had come close home, for he adds, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me. Horrors such as those which torment the lost seized me, grasped me, found me out, searched me through and through, and held me a prisoner. He means by the pains of hell those pangs which belong to death, those terrors which are connected

with the grave; these were so closely upon him that they fixed their teeth in him as hounds seize their prey. I found trouble and sorrow—trouble was around me, and sorrow within me. His griefs were double, and as he searched into them they increased. A man rejoices when he finds a hid treasure; but what must be the anguish of a man who finds, where he least expected it, a vein of trouble and sorrow? The Psalmist was sought for by trouble and it found him out, and when he himself became a seeker he found no relief, but double distress.

Verse 4. *Then I called upon the name of the LORD.* Prayer is never out of season, he prayed *then*, when things were at their worst. When the good man could not run to God, he *called* to him. In his extremity his faith came to the front: it was useless to call on man, and it may have seemed almost as useless to appeal to the Lord; but yet he did with his whole soul invoke all the attributes which make up the sacred name of Jehovah, and thus he proved the truth of his confidence. We can some of us remember certain very special times of trial of which we can now say, "*then* called I upon the name of the Lord." The Psalmist appealed to the Lord's mercy, truth, power, and faithfulness, and this was his prayer,—O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. This form of petition is short, comprehensive, to the point, humble, and earnest. It were well if all our prayers were moulded upon this model; perhaps they would be if we were in similar circumstances to those of the Psalmist, for real trouble produces real prayer. Here we have no multiplicity of words, and no fine arrangement of sentences; everything is simple and natural; there is not a redundant syllable, and yet there is not one lacking.

Verse 5. *Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.* In hearing prayer the grace and righteousness of Jehovah are both conspicuous. It is a great favour to hear a sinner's prayer, and yet since the Lord has promised to do so, he is not unrighteous to forget his promise and disregard the cries of his people. The combination of grace and righteousness in the dealings of God with his servants can only be explained by remembering the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the cross we see how gracious is the Lord and righteous. Yea, our God is merciful, or compassionate, tender, pitiful, full of mercy. We who have accepted him as ours have no doubt as to his mercy, for he would never have been our God if he had not been merciful. See how the attribute of righteousness seems to stand between two guards of love:—gracious, *righteous*, merciful. The sword of justice is scabarded in a jewelled sheath of grace.

Verse 6. *The LORD preserveth the simple.* Those who have a great deal of wit may take care of themselves. Those who have no worldly craft and subtlety and guile, but simply trust in God, and do the right, may depend upon it that God's care shall be over them. The worldly wise with all their prudence shall be taken in their own craftiness, but those who walk in their integrity with single minded truthfulness before God shall be protected against the wiles of their enemies, and enabled to outlive their foes. Though the saints are like sheep in the midst of wolves, and comparatively defenceless, yet there are more sheep in the world than wolves, and it is highly probable that the

sheep will feed in safety when not a single wolf is left upon the face of the earth: even so the meek shall inherit the earth when the wicked shall be no more. I was brought low, and he helped me,—simple though I was, the Lord did not pass me by. Though reduced in circumstances, slandered in character, depressed in spirit, and sick in body, the Lord helped me. There are many ways in which the child of God may be brought low, but the help of God is as various as the need of his people: he supplies our necessities when impoverished, restores our character when maligned, raises up friends for us when deserted, comforts us when desponding, and heals our diseases when we are sick. There are thousands in the church of God at this time who can each one of them say for himself, "*I was brought low, and he helped me.*" Whenever this can be said it should be said to the praise of the glory of his grace, and for the comforting of others who may pass through the like ordeal. Note how David after stating the general doctrine that the Lord preserveth the simple, proves and illustrates it from his own personal experience. The habit of taking home a general truth and testing the power of it in our own case is an exceedingly blessed one; it is the way in which the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us, and so we become witnesses unto the Lord our God.

Verse 7. *Return, unto thy rest, O my soul.* He calls the rest still his own, and feels full liberty to return to it. What a mercy it is that even if our soul has left its rest for a while we can tell it—"it is thy rest still." The Psalmist had evidently been somewhat disturbed in mind, his troubles had ruffled his spirit but now with a sense of answered prayer upon him he quiets his soul. He had rested before, for he knew the blessed repose of faith, and therefore he returns to the God who had been the refuge of his soul in former days. Even as a bird flies to its nest, so does his soul fly to his God. Whenever a child of God even for a moment loses his peace of mind, he should be concerned to find it again, not by seeking it in the world or in his own experience, but in the Lord alone. When the believer prays, and the Lord inclines his ear, the road to the old rest is before him, let him not be slow to follow it. For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. Thou hast served a good God, and built upon a sure foundation; go not about to find any other rest, but come back to him who in former days hath condescended to enrich thee by his love. What a text is this! and what an exposition of it is furnished by the biography of every believing man and woman! The Lord hath dealt bountifully with us, for he hath given us his Son, and in him he hath given us all things: he hath sent us his Spirit, and by him he conveys to us all spiritual blessings. God dealeth with us like a God; he lays his fulness open to us, and of that fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. We have sat at no niggard's table, we have been clothed by no penurious hand, we have been equipped by no grudging provider; let us come back to him who has treated us with such exceeding kindness. More arguments follow.

Verse 8. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* The triune God has given us a trinity of deliverances: our life has been spared from the grave, our heart has been uplifted from its griefs, and our course in life has been preserved from dishonour. We

ought not to be satisfied unless we are conscious of all three of these deliverance. If our soul has been saved from death, why do we weep? What cause for sorrow remains? Whence those tears? And if our tears have been wiped away, can we endure to fall again into sin? Let us not rest unless with steady feet we pursue the path of the upright, escaping every snare and shunning every stumblingblock. Salvation, joy, and holiness must go together, and they are all provided for us in the covenant of grace. Death is vanquished, tears are dried, and fears are banished when the Lord is near. Thus has the Psalmist explained the reasons of his resolution to call upon God as long as he lived, and none can question but that he had come to a most justifiable resolve. When from so great a depth he had been uplifted by so special an interposition of God, he was undoubtedly bound to be forever the hearty worshipper of Jehovah, to whom he owed so much. Do we not all feel the force of the reasoning, and will we not carry out the conclusion? May God the Holy Spirit help us so to pray without ceasing and in everything to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us.

Verse 9. *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.* This is the Psalmist's second resolution, to live as in the sight of God in the midst of the sons of men. By a man's walk is understood his way of life: some men live only as in the sight of their fellow men, having regard to human judgment and opinion; but the truly gracious man considers the presence of God, and acts under the influence of his all observing eye. "Thou God seest me" is a far better influence than "My master sees me." The life of faith, hope, holy fear, and true holiness is produced by a sense of living and walking before the Lord, and he who has been favoured with divine deliverances in answer to prayer finds his own experience the best reason for a holy life, and the best assistance to his endeavours. We know that God in a special manner is nigh unto his people: what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

Verse 10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* I could not have spoken thus if it had not been for my faith: I should never have spoken unto God in prayer, nor have been able now to speak to my fellow men in testimony if it had not been that faith kept me alive, and brought me a deliverance, whereof I have good reason to boast. Concerning the things of God no man should speak unless he believes; the speech of the waverer is mischievous, but the tongue of the believer is profitable; the most powerful speech which has ever been uttered by the lip of man has emanated from a heart fully persuaded of the truth of God. Not only the Psalmist, but such men as Luther, and Calvin, and other great witnesses for the faith could each one most heartily say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." I was greatly afflicted. There was no mistake about that; the affliction was as bitter and as terrible as it well could be, and since I have been delivered from it, I am sure that the deliverance is no fanatical delusion, but a self evident fact; therefore am I the more resolved to speak to the honour of God. Though greatly afflicted, the Psalmist had not ceased to believe: his faith was tried but not destroyed.

Verse 11. *I said in my haste, All men are liars.* In a modified sense the expression will bear justification, even though hastily uttered, for all men will prove to be liars if we unduly trust in them; some from want of truthfulness, and others from want of power. But from the expression, "I said in my haste," it is clear that the Psalmist did not justify his own language, but considered it as the ebullition of a hasty temper. In the sense in which he spoke his language was unjustifiable. He had no right to distrust all men, for many of them are honest, truthful, and conscientious; there are faithful friends and loyal adherents yet alive; and if sometimes they disappoint us, we ought not to call them liars for failing when the failure arises entirely from want of power, and not from lack of will. Under great affliction our temptation will be to form hasty judgments of our fellow men, and knowing this to be the case we ought carefully to watch our spirit, and to keep the door of our lips. The Psalmist had believed, and therefore he spoke; he had doubted, and therefore he spoke in haste. He believed, and therefore he rightly prayed to God; he disbelieved, and therefore he wrongfully accused mankind. Speaking is as ill in some cases as it is good in others. Speaking in haste is generally followed by bitter repentance. It is much better to be quiet when our spirit is disturbed and hasty, for it is so much easier to say than to unsay; we may repent of our words, but we cannot so recall them as to undo the mischief they have done. If even David had to eat his own words, when he spoke in a hurry, none of us can trust our tongue without a bridle.

Verse 12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?* He wisely leaves off fretting about man's falsehood and his own ill humour, and directs himself to his God. It is of little use to be harping on the string of man's imperfection and deceitfulness; it is infinitely better to praise the perfection and faithfulness of God. The question of the verse is a very proper one: the Lord has rendered so much mercy to us that we ought to look about us, and look within us, and see what can be done by us to manifest our gratitude. We ought not only to do what is plainly before us, but also with holy ingenuity to search out various ways by which we may render fresh praises unto our God. His benefits are so many that we cannot number them, and our ways of acknowledging his bestowments ought to be varied and numerous in proportion. Each person should have his own peculiar mode of expressing gratitude. The Lord sends each one a special benefit, let each one enquire, "What shall I render? What form of service would be most becoming in me?"

Verse 13. *I will take the cup of salvation.* "I will take" is a strange answer to the question, "What shall I render?" and yet it is the wisest reply that could possibly be given.

"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea
And ask him still for more."

To take the cup of salvation was in itself an act of worship, and it was accompanied with other forms

of adoration, hence the Psalmist says, and call upon the name of the LORD. He means that he will utter blessings and thanksgivings and prayers, and then drink of the cup which the Lord had filled with his saving grace. What a cup this is! Upon the table of infinite love stands the cup full of blessing; it is ours by faith to take it in our hand, make it our own, and partake of it, and then with joyful hearts to laud and magnify the gracious One who has filled it for our sakes that we may drink and be refreshed. We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table, we can do it spiritually every time we grasp the golden chalice of the covenant, realizing the fulness of blessing which it contains, and by faith receiving its divine contents into our inmost soul. Beloved reader, let us pause here and take a long and deep draught from the cup which Jesus filled, and then with devout hearts let us worship God.

Verse 14. *I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.* The Psalmist has already stated his third resolution, to devote himself to the worship of God evermore, and here he commences the performance of that resolve. The vows which he had made in anguish, he now determines to fulfil: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord." He does so at once, "*now*," and that publicly, "in the presence of all his people." Good resolutions cannot be carried out too speedily; vows become debts, and debts should be paid. It is well to have witnesses to the payment of just debts, and we need not be ashamed to have witnesses to the fulfilling of holy vows, for this will show that we are not ashamed of our Lord, and it may be a great benefit to those who look on and hear us publicly sounding forth the praises of our prayer hearing God. How can those do this who have never with their mouth confessed their Saviour? O secret disciples, what say you to this verse! Be encouraged to come into the light and own your Redeemer. If, indeed, you have been saved, come forward and declare it in his own appointed way.

Verse 15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,* and therefore he did not suffer the Psalmist to die, but delivered his soul from death. This seems to indicate that the song was meant to remind Jewish families of the mercies received by any one of the household, supposing him to have been sore sick and to have been restored to health, for the Lord values the lives of his saints, and often spares them where others perish. They shall not die prematurely; they shall be immortal till their work is done; and when their time shall come to die, then their deaths shall be precious. The Lord watches over their dying beds, smooths their pillows, sustains their hearts, and receives their souls. Those who are redeemed with precious blood are so dear to God that even their deaths are precious to him. The deathbeds of saints are very precious to the church, she often learns much from them; they are very precious to all believers, who delight to treasure up the last words of the departed; but they are most of all precious to the Lord Jehovah himself, who views the triumphant deaths of his gracious ones with sacred delight. If we have walked before him in the land of the living, we need not fear to die before him when the hour of our departure is at hand.

Verse 16. The man of God in paying his vows rededicates himself unto God; the offering which he brings is himself, as he cries, *O LORD, truly I am thy servant*, rightfully, really, heartily, constantly, I own that I am thine, for thou hast delivered and redeemed me. I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, a servant born in thy house, born of a servant and so born a servant, and therefore doubly thine. My mother was thine handmaid, and I, her son, confess that I am altogether thine by claims arising out of my birth. O that children of godly parents would thus judge; but, alas, there are many who are the sons of the Lord's handmaids, but they are not themselves his servants. They give sad proof that grace does not run in the blood. David's mother was evidently a gracious woman, and he is glad to remember that fact, and to see in it a fresh obligation to devote himself to God. Thou hast loosed my bonds, freedom from bondage binds me to thy service. He who is loosed from the bonds of sin, death, and hell should rejoice to wear the easy yoke of the great Deliverer. Note how the sweet singer delights to dwell upon his belonging to the Lord; it is evidently his glory, a thing of which he is proud, a matter which causes him intense satisfaction. Verily, it ought to create rapture in our souls if we are able to call Jesus Master, and are acknowledged by him as his servants.

Verse 17. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.* Being thy servant, I am bound to sacrifice to thee, and having received spiritual blessings at thy hands I will not bring bullock or goat, but I will bring that which is more suitable, namely, the thanksgiving of my heart. My inmost soul shall adore thee in gratitude. And will call upon the name of the Lord, that is to say, I will bow before thee reverently, lift up my heart in love to thee, think upon thy character, and adore thee as thou dost reveal thyself. He is fond of this occupation, and several times in this Psalm declares that "he will call upon the name of the Lord, "while at the same time he rejoices that he had done so many a time before. Good feelings and actions bear repeating: the more of hearty callings upon God the better.

Verse 18. *I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.* He repeats the declaration. A good thing is worth saying twice. He thus stirs himself up to greater heartiness, earnestness, and diligence in keeping his vow,—really paying it at the very moment that he is declaring his resolution to do so. The mercy came in secret, but the praise is rendered in public; the company was, however, select; he did not cast his pearls before swine, but delivered his testimony before those who could understand and appreciate it.

Verse 19. *In the courts of the LORD'S house:* in the proper place, where God had ordained that he should be worshipped. See how he is stirred up at the remembrance of the house of the Lord, and must needs speak of the holy city with a note of joyful exclamation—In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. The very thought of the beloved Zion touched his heart, and he writes as if he were actually addressing Jerusalem, whose name was dear to him. There would he pay his vows, in the abode of fellowship, in the very heart of Judea, in the place to which the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. There is nothing like witnessing for Jesus, where the report thereof will be carried into a

thousand homes. God's praise is not to be confined to a closet, nor his name to be whispered in holes and corners, as if we were afraid that men should hear us; but in the thick of the throng, and in the very centre of assemblies, we should lift up heart and voice unto the Lord, and invite others to join with us in adoring him, saying, Praise ye the LORD, or Hallelujah. This was a very fit conclusion of a song to be sung when all the people were gathered together at Jerusalem to keep the feast. God's Spirit moved the writers of these Psalms to give them a fitness and suitability which was more evident in their own day than now; but enough is perceptible to convince us that every line and word had a peculiar adaptation to the occasions for which the sacred sonnets were composed. When we worship the Lord we ought with great care to select the words of prayer and praise, and not to trust to the opening of a hymn book, or to the unconsidered extemporizing of the moment. Let all things be done decently and in order, and let all things begin and end with Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. A Psalm of Thanksgiving in the Person of Christ. He is imagined by the prophet to have passed through the sorrows and afflictions of life. The atonement is passed. He has risen from the dead. He is on the right hand of the Majesty on High; and he proclaims to the whole world the mercies he experienced from God in the day of his incarnation, and the glories which he has received in the kingdom of his Heavenly Father. Yet, although the Psalm possesses this power, and, by its own internal evidence, proves the soundness of the interpretation, it is yet highly mystic in its mode of disclosure, and requires careful meditation in bringing out its real results. Its language, too, is not so exclusively appropriate to the Messiah, that it shall not be repeated and applied by the believer to his own trials in the world; so that while there is much that finds a ready parallel in the exaltation of Christ in heaven, there is much that would seem to be restrained to his condition upon earth. It therefore depends much on *the mind* of the individual, whether he will receive it in the higher sense of the Redeemer's glory; or restrict it *solely* to a thanksgiving for blessings amidst those sufferings in life to which all men have been subject in the same manner, though not to the same extent as Jesus. The most perfect and the most profitable reading would combine the two, taking Christ as *the exemplar* of God's mercies towards ourselves.

1. (Ps 116:1) Enthroned in eternity, and triumphant over sin and death—I—Christ—am well pleased that my Heavenly Father listened to the anxious prayers that I made to him in the day of my sorrows; when I had neither strength in my own mind, nor assistance from men; therefore "*through my days*"—through the endless ages of my eternal existence—will I call upon him in my gratitude, and praise him with my whole heart.

2. (Ps 116:3) In the troublous times of my incarnation I was encircled with snares, and urged onwards towards my death. The priest and ruler; the Pharisee and the scribe; the rich and the poor, clamoured

fiercely for my destruction. The whole nation conspired against me. "*The bands of the grave*" laid hold of me, and I was hurried to the cross.

3. (Ps 116:4) Then, *truly* did Christ find heaviness and affliction. "His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He prayed anxiously to his Heavenly Father, that "the cup might pass from him." The fate of the whole world was in the balance; and he supplicated with agony, that his *soul* might be delivered.

4. (Ps 116:5) The abrupt breaking off in this verse from the direct narrative of his own sorrows is wonderfully grand and beautiful. Nor less so, is the expression "*our God*" as applied by Christ to his own disciples and believers. "*I called, "he states, "on the name of the LORD."* But he does not yet state the answer. He leaves that to be inferred from the assurance that God is ever gracious to the faithful; yea, "*our God*"—the protector of the Christian church, as well as of myself—"*our God is merciful.*"

5. (Ps 116:6) Instantly, however, he resumes. Mark the energy of the language, "I was afflicted; and he delivered me." And how delivered? The soul of Christ hast returned freely to its tranquillity; for though the body and the frame perished on the tree, yet the soul burst through the bands of death. Again in the full stature of a perfect man Christ rose resplendent in glory to the mansions of eternity. The tears ceased: the sorrows were hushed; and henceforward, through the boundless day of immortality, doth lie "walk before Jehovah, in the land of *the living.*" This last is one of those expressions in the Psalm which might, without reflection, seem adapted to the rescued believer's state on earth, rather than Christ's in heaven. But applying the language of earthly things to heavenly—which is usual, even in the most mystic writings of Scripture—nothing can be finer than the appellation of "*the land of the living,*" when assigned to the future residence of the soul. It is the noblest application of the metaphor, and is singularly appropriate to those eternal mansions where death and sorrow are alike unknown.

6. (Ps 116:10) This stanza will bear an emendation.

I felt confidence, although I said,

"I am sore afflicted."

I said in my sudden terror,—

"All mankind are false." French.

It alludes to the eve of his crucifixion, when worn down with long watchfulness and fasting, his spirit almost fainted in the agony of Gethsemane. Still, oppressed and stricken as he was in soul, he yet trusted in Jehovah, for he felt assured that he would not forsake him. But, sustained by God, he was deserted by men, the disciples with whom he had lived; the multitudes whom he had taught; the afflicted whom he had healed, "*all* forsook him and fled." Not one—not even the "disciple whom he loved"—remained; and in the anguish of that desertion he could not refrain from the bitter thought,

that all mankind were alike false and treacherous.

7. (Ps 116:12) But that dread hour has passed. He has risen from the dead; and stands girt with truth and holiness and glory. What then is his earliest thought? Hear it, O man, and blush for thine oft ingratitude! I will lift up "*the cup of deliverance*"—the drink offering made to God with sacrifice after any signal mercies received—and bless the Lord who has been thus gracious to me. In the sight of the whole world will I pay my past vows unto Jehovah, and bring nations from every portion of the earth, reconciled and holy through the blood of my atonement. The language in these verses, as in the concluding part of the Psalm, is wholly drawn from earthly objects and modes of religious service, well recognized by the Jews. It is in these things that the *spiritual* sense is required to be separated from the external emblem. For instance, the sacramental cup was without a doubt drawn and instituted from the cup used in commemoration of deliverances by the Jews. It is used figuratively by Christ in heaven; but the reflective mind can scarcely fail to see the beauty of imagining it in his hand in thankfulness for his triumph, *because* "he has burst his bonds in sunder": the bonds which held him fast in death, and confined him to the tomb: the assertion that "precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints" *especially includes* the sacrifice of Christ within its more general allusion to the blood shed, in such abundance, by prophets and martyrs to the truth. In the same manner the worship of Jehovah in the courts of his temple at Jerusalem is used in figure for the open promulgation of Christianity to the whole world. The temple services were the most solemn and most public which were offered by the Jews; and when Christ is said to "offer his sacrifices of thanksgiving" to God *in the sight of all his people*, the figure is easily separated from the grosser element; and *the conversion* of all people intimated under the form of Christ *seen by all*. *William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 1. *I love.* The expression of the prophet's affection is in this short abrupt phrase, "*I love*," which is but one word in the original, and expressed as a full and entire sentence in itself, thus—*I love because the Lord hath heard*, etc. Most translators so turn it, as if, by a trajection, or passing of a word from one sentence to another, this title Lord were to be joined with the first clause, thus—(hwyy emvy yk ytbha), "*I love the LORD, because he hath heard*," etc. I deny not but that thus the sense is made somewhat the more perspicuous, and the words run the more roundly; yet are they not altogether so emphatic. For when a man's heart is inflamed, and his soul lavished with a deep apprehension of some great and extraordinary favour, his affection will cause interruption in the expression thereof, and make stops in his speech; and therefore this concise and abrupt clause, "*I love*," declareth a more entire and ardent affection than a more full and round phrase would do. Great is the force of true love, so that it cannot be sufficiently expressed. *William Gouge, 1575-1653.*

Verse 1. *I love the LORD.* Oh that there were such hearts in us that we could every one say, as David, with David's spirit, upon his evidence, "*I love the LORD*"; that were more worth than all these, viz.; First, to know all secrets. Secondly, to prophesy. Thirdly, to move mountains, etc., 1Co 13:1-2,

etc. "*I love the LORD*"; it is more than I know the Lord; for even castaways are enlightened, (Heb 6:4); more than I fear the Lord, for devils fear him unto trembling (Jas 2:19); more than I pray to God (Isa 1:15). What should I say? More than all services, than all virtues separate from charity: truly say the schools, charity is the form of all virtues, because it forms them all to acceptability, for nothing is accepted but what issues from charity, or, in other words, from the love of God. *William Slater*, 1638.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because*, etc. How vain and foolish is the talk, "To love God for his benefits towards us is mercenary, and cannot be pure love!" Whether pure or impure, there is no other love that can flow from the heart of the creature to its Creator. "We love him," said the holiest of Christ's disciples, "because he first loved us;" and the increase of our love and filial obedience is in proportion to the increased sense we have of our obligation to him. We love him for the benefits bestowed on us.—*Love begets love. Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1. *He hath heard my voice.* But is this such a benefit to us, that God hears us? Is his hearing our voice such an argument of his love? Alas! he may hear us, and we be never the better: he may hear our voice, and yet his love to us may be but little, for who will not give a man the hearing, though he love him not at all? With men perhaps it may be so, but not with God; for his hearing is not only voluntary, but reserved; *non omnibus dormit*: his ears are not open to every one's cry; indeed, to hear us, is in God so great a favour, that he may well be counted his favourite whom he vouchsafes to hear: and the rather, for that his hearing is always operative, and with a purpose of helping; so that if he hear my voice, I may be sure he means to grant my supplication; or rather perhaps in David's manner of expressing, and in God's manner of proceeding, to hear my voice is no less in effect than to grant my supplication. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 1. *Hath heard.* By hearing prayer God giveth evidence of the notice which he taketh of our estates, of the respect he beareth to our persons, of the pity he hath of our miseries, of his purpose to supply our wants, and of his mind to do us good according to our needs. *William Gouge.*

Verses 1-2. The first emvy is more of an aorist. The Lord hears always; and then, making a distinction ygwa hjh. He has done it hitherto: adqa Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live, cleaving to Him in love and faith! It should be noticed, in addition, that adq here is not simply the prayer for help, but includes also the praising and thanksgiving, according to the twofold signification of hwhy Mvk arq, in Ps 116:4,13,17; therefore, Jarchi very excellently says: *In the time of my distress I will call upon Him, and in the time of my deliverance I will praise Him. Rudolph Stier.*

Verses 1-2. *I love. Therefore will I call upon him.* It is love that doth open our mouths, that we may praise God with joyful lips: "I will love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplications"; and then, Ps 116:2, "I will call upon him as long as I live." The proper intent of mercies is to draw us to God. When the heart is full of a sense of the goodness of the Lord, the tongue cannot hold its peace. Self love may lead us to prayers, but love to God excites us to praises: therefore to seek and not to

praise, is to be lovers of ourselves rather than of God. *Thomas Manton.*

Verses 1, 12. *I love. What shall I render?* Love and thankfulness are like the symbolical qualities of the elements, easily resolved into each other. David begins with, "*I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice*"; and to enkindle this grace into a greater flame, he records the mercies of God in some following verses; which done, then he is in the right mood for praise; and cries, "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?*" The spouse, when thoroughly awake, pondering with herself what a friend had been at her door, and how his sweet company was lost through her unkindness, shakes off her sloth, riseth, and away she goes after him; now, when by running after her beloved, she hath put her soul into a heat of love, she breaks out in praising him from top to toe. So 5:10. That is the acceptable praising which comes from a warm heart; and the saint must use some holy exercise to stir up his habit of love, which like natural heat in the body, is preserved and increased by motion. *William Gumall.*

Verse 2. *He hath inclined his ear unto me.* How great a blessing is the inclining of the Divine ear, may be judged from the conduct of great men, who do not admit a wretched petitioner to audience; but, if they do anything, receive the main part of the complaint through the officer appointed for such matters, or through a servant. But God himself hears immediately, and *inclines his ear*, hearing readily, graciously, constantly, etc. Who would not pray? *Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 2. And now because he hath inclined his ear unto me, I will therefore call upon him as long as I live: that if it be expected I should call upon any other, it must be when I am dead; for as long as I live, I have vowed to call upon God. But will this be well done? May I not, in so doing, do more than I shall have thanks for? Is this the requital that God shall have for his kindness in hearing me, that now he shall have a customer of me, and never be quiet because of my continual running to him, and calling upon him? Doth God get anything by my calling upon him, that I should make it a vow, as though in calling upon him I did him a pleasure? O my soul, I would that God might indeed have a customer of me in praying; although I confess I should not be so bold to call upon him so continually, if his own commanding me did not make it a duty; for hath not God bid me call upon him when I am in trouble? and is there any time that I am not in trouble, as long as I live in this vale of misery? and then can there be any time as long as I live, that I must not call upon him? For shall God bid me, and shall I not do it? Shall God incline his ear, and stand listening to hear, and shall I hold my peace that he may have nothing to hear? *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2. *Therefore will I call upon him.* If the hypocrite speed in prayer, and get what he asks, then also he throws up prayer, and will ask no more. If from a sick bed he be raised to health, he leaves prayer behind him, as it were, sick abed; he grows weak in calling upon God, when at his call God hath given him strength. And thus it is in other instances. When he hath got what he hath a mind to in prayer, he hath no more mind to pray. Whereas a godly man prays after he hath sped, as he did

before, and though he fall not into those troubles again, and so is not occasioned to urge those petitions again which he did in trouble, yet he cannot live without prayer, because he cannot live out of communion with God. The creature is as the white of an egg, tasteless to him, unless he enjoy God. David saith, "*I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications*"; that is, because he hath granted me that which I supplicated to him for. But did this grant of what he had asked take him off from asking more? The next words show us what his resolution was upon that grant. "*Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live*"; as if he had said, I will never give over praying, forasmuch as I have been heard in prayer. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 2. *As long as I live.*—Not on some few days, but every day of my life; for to pray on certain days, and not on all, is the mark of one who loathes and not of one who loves. *Ambrose.*

Verse 3. Here begins the exemplification of God's kindness to his servant; the first branch whereof is a description of the danger wherein he was and out of which he was delivered. Now, to magnify the kindness of God the more in delivering him out of the same, he setteth it out with much variety of words and phrases.

The first word *yibx*, "*sorrows*," is diversely translated. Some expound it snares, some cords, some sorrows. The reason of this difference is because the word itself is metaphorical. It is taken from cruel creditors, who will be sure to tie their debtors fast, as with cords, so that they shall not easily get loose and free again. The pledge which the debtor leaveth with his creditor as a pawn, hath this name in Hebrew; so also a cord wherewith things are fast tied; and the mast of a ship fast fixed, and tied on every side with cords; and bands or troops of men combined together; and the pain of a woman in travail, which is very great; and destruction with pain and anguish. Thus we see that such a word is used here as setteth out a most lamentable and inextricable case.

The next word, "*of death*" *twm*, sheweth that his case was deadly; death was before his eyes; death was as it were threatened. He is said to be "*compassed*" herewith in two respects: (1) To show that these sorrows were not far off, but even upon him, as waters that compass a man when he is in the midst of them, or as enemies that begird a place. (2) To show that they were not few, but many sorrows, as bees that swarm together.

The word translated "*pains*," *yrum*, in the original is put for sacks fast bound together, and flint stones, and fierce enemies, and hard straits; so that this word also aggravates his misery.

The word translated "*hell*," *lwav*, is usually taken in the Old Testament for the grave; it is derived from *lav*, a verb that signifieth to crave, because the grave is ever craving, and never satisfied.

The word translated "*gat hold on me*," *ygwau*m, and "*I found*," *auma*, are both the same verb; they differ only in circumstances of tense, number, and person. The former sheweth that these miseries found him, and as a serjeant they seized on him; he did not seek them, he would wittingly and willingly have escaped them, if he could. The latter sheweth that indeed he found them; he felt the

tartness and bitterness, the smart and pain of them.

The word translated *trouble*, hru of dwu, hath a near affinity with the former word translated pain, dum of dwu, and is used to set out as great misery as that; and yet further to aggravate the same, another word is added thereto, "*sorrow*."

The last word, "*sorrow*," Nwgy of hgy, imports such a kind of calamity as maketh them that lie under it much to grieve, and also moveth others that behold it much to pity them. It is often used in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Either of these two last words, trouble and sorrow, do declare a very perplexed and distressed estate; what then both of them joined together? For the Holy Ghost doth not multiply words in vain. *William Gouge*.

Verse 3. Gat hold upon me. The original word is, *found me*, as we put in the margin. They found him, as an officer or serjeant finds a person that he is sent to arrest; who no sooner finds him, but he takes hold of him, or takes him into custody. When warrants are sent out to take a man who keeps out of the way, the return is, *Non est inventus*, the man is not found, he cannot be met with, or taken hold of. David's pains quickly found him, and having found him they gat hold of him. Such finding is so certainly and suddenly followed With taking hold, and holding what is taken, that one word in the Hebrew serves to express both acts. When God sends out troubles and afflictions as officers to attack any man, they will find him, and finding him, they will take hold of him. The days of affliction will take hold; there's no striving, no struggling with them, no getting out of their hands. These divine pursuivants will neither be persuaded nor bribed to let you go, till God speak the word, till God say, Deliver him, release him. *I found trouble and sorrow*. I found trouble which I looked not for. I was not searching after sorrow, but I found it. There's an elegancy in the original. The Hebrew is, "*The pains of hell found me*." They found me, I did not find them; but no sooner had the pains of hell found me, than I found trouble and sorrow, enough, and soon enough. *Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 3. See how the saints instead of lessening the dangers and tribulations, with which they are exercised by God, magnify them in figurative phraseology; neither do they conceal their distress of soul, but clearly and willingly set it forth. Far otherwise are the minds of those who regard their own glory and not the glory of God. The saints, that they may make more illustrious the glory of the help of God, declare things concerning themselves which make but little for their own glory. *Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verses 3-7. Those usually have most of heaven upon earth, that formerly have met with most of hell upon earth. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow:* (as Jonas crying in the belly of hell). But look upon him within two or three verses after, and you may see him in an ecstasy, as if he were in heaven; Ps 116:7: *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee*. *Matthew Lawrence*.

Verse 4. *The name of the LORD*. God's name, as it is set out in the word, is both a glorious name, full

of majesty; and also a gracious name, full of mercy. His majesty worketh fear and reverence, his mercy faith and confidence. By these graces man's heart is kept within such a compass, that he will neither presume above that which is meet, nor despond more than there is cause. But where God's name is not rightly known, it cannot be avoided but that they who come before him must needs rush upon the rock of presumption, or sink into the gulf of desperation. Necessary, therefore, it is that God be known of them that pray to him, that in truth they may say, "*We have called upon the name of the LORD.*" Be persuaded hereby so to offer up your spiritual sacrifice of supplication to God, that he may have respect to your persons and prayers, as he had respect to Abel and his offering. Learn to know the name of God, as in his word it is made known; and then, especially when you draw near to him, meditate on his name. Assuredly God will take good notice of them that take due notice of him, and will open his ears to them by name who rightly call upon his name. *William Gouge.*

Verse 4. *O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.* A short prayer for so great a suit, and yet as short as it was, it prevailed. If we wondered before at the power of God, we may wonder now at the power of prayer, that can prevail with God, for obtaining of that which in nature is impossible, and to reason is incredible. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4. We learn here that there is nothing better and more effectual in distressing agonies than assiduous prayer—*Then called I upon the name of the LORD;* but in such prayers the first care ought to be for the salvation of the soul—*I beseech thee, deliver my soul;* for, this being done, God also either removes or mitigates the bodily disease. *Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 5. *Gracious is the Lord,* etc. He is *gracious* in hearing, he is "*righteous*" in judging, he is "*merciful*" in pardoning, and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? He is righteous to reward according to deserts; he is gracious to reward above deserts; yea, he is merciful to reward without deserts; and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? He is gracious, and this shows his bounty; he is righteous, and this shows his justice; yea, he is merciful, and this shows his love; and how, then, can I doubt of his will to help me? If he were not gracious I could not hope he would hear me; if he were not righteous, I could not depend upon his promise; if he were not merciful, I could not expect his pardon; but now that he is gracious and righteous and merciful too, how can I doubt of his will to help me? *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5. The first attribute, "*gracious*," (Nwgx) hath especial respect to that goodness which is in God himself. The root (Ngx) whence it cometh signifieth to do a thing gratis, freely, of one's own mind and goodwill. This is that word which is used to set out the free grace and mere goodwill of God, thus (Nxa ddva ta ytgxw) "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious," Ex 33:19. There is also an adverb (Mgh) derived thence, which signifieth gratis, freely, as where Laban thus speaketh to Jacob, "Shouldest thou serve me for nought?" Thus is the word opposed to merit. And hereby the prophet acknowledged that the deliverance which God gave was for the Lord's own sake, upon no desert of

him that was delivered.

The second attribute, "*righteous*" or just, (qydu), hath particular relation to the promise of God. God's righteousness largely taken is the integrity or equity of all his counsels, words, and actions... Particularly is God's righteousness manifested in giving reward and taking vengeance. Thus it is said to be "a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest," 2Th 1:6-7... But the occasion of mentioning God's righteousness here in this place being to show the ground of his calling on God, and of God's delivering him, it must needs have respect to God's word and promise, and to God's truth in performing what he hath promised. *William Gouge*.

Verse 5. *The Lord; our God.* The first title, "*Lord*," sets out the excellency of God. Fit mention is here made thereof, to shew the blessed concurrence of greatness and goodness in God. Though he be Jehovah the Lord, yet is he gracious, and righteous, and merciful. The second title, "*our God*," manifests a peculiar relation betwixt him and the faithful that believe in him, and depend on him, as this prophet did. And to them in an especial manner the Lord is gracious, which moved him thus to change the person; for where he had said in the third person "the Lord is gracious," here, in the first person, he says, "*our God*," yet so that he appropriates not this privilege to himself, but acknowledgeth it to be common to all of like character by using the plural number, "*our*." *William Gouge*.

Verse 5. The "Berlenburger Bibelwerk" says, "The righteousness is very significantly placed between the grace and the mercy: for it is still necessary, that the evil should be mortified and driven out. Grace lays, as it were, the foundation for salvation, and mercy perfects the work; but not till righteousness has finished its intermediary work." *Rudolph Stier*.

Verse 5. *Our God is merciful.* Mercy is God's darling attribute; and by his infinite wisdom he has enabled mercy to triumph over justice without in any degree violating his honour or his truth. The character of merciful is that by which our God seems to delight in being known. When he proclaimed himself amid terrific grandeur to the children of Israel, it was as "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." And such was the impression of this his character on the mind of Jonah that he says to him, "I knew that thou wert a merciful God." These, however, are not mere assertions—claims made to the character by God on the one hand, and extorted without evidence from man on the other; for in whatever way we look upon God, and examine into his conduct towards his creatures, we perceive it to bear the impression of mercy. Nor can we more exalt the Lord our God than by speaking of his mercy and confiding in it; for our "Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy." *John Gwyther*, 1833.

Verse 6. *The Lord preserveth the simple.* God taketh most care of them that, being otherwise least cared for, wholly depend on him. These are in a good sense simple ones; simple in the world's

account, and simple in their own eyes. Such as he that said, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Ps 22:6. And again, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me." Ps 40:17. These are those poor ones of a contrite spirit on whom the Lord looketh. Isa 66:2. Of such fatherless is God a father; and of such widows a judge. Read Ps 68:5, and Ps 146:7-9. Yea, read observantly the histories of the Gospel, and well weigh who they were to whom Christ in the days of his flesh afforded succour, and you shall find them to be such simple ones as are here intended. By such objects the free grace and merciful mind of the Lord is best manifested. Their case being most miserable, in reference to human helps, the greater doth God's mercy appear to be; and since there is nothing in them to procure favour or succour from God, for in their own and others' eyes they are nothing, what God doth for them evidently appeareth to be freely done. Behold here how of all others they who seem to have least cause to trust on God have most cause to trust on him. Simple persons, silly wretches, despicable fools in the world's account, who have not subtle brains, or crafty wits to search after indirect means, have, notwithstanding, enough to support them, in the grand fact that they are such as the Lord preserveth. Now, who knoweth not that "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes"? Ps 118:8-9. *William Gouge.*

Verse 6. *The Lord preserveth the simple.* How delightful it is to be able to reflect on the character of God as *preserving* the soul. The word properly signifies to defend us at any season of danger. The Hebrew word which is translated "*simple*," signifies one who has no control over himself, one that cannot resist the power and influence of those around, and one, therefore, subject to the greatest peril from which he has naturally no deliverance. "The Lord preserveth": his eye is upon them, his hand is over them, and they cannot fall. The word "*simple*" signifies likewise those that are ignorant of their condition, and not watching over their foes. Delightful thought, that though we may be thus ignorant, yet we are blessed with the means of escape! We may be simple to the last extent, and our simplicity may be such as to involve our mind in the greatest doubt: the Lord preserveth us, and let us rest in him. It is delightful to reflect, that it is the simple in whom the Lord delights, whom he loves to bless. We are sometimes especially in the condition in which we may be inclined to make the inquiry, how we may be saved. We suppose there are many truths to be apprehended, many principles to be realized before we can be saved. No; "the Lord preserveth the simple." We may be able to reconcile scarcely any of the doctrines of Christianity with each other; we may find ourselves in the greatest perplexity when we examine the evidences on which they rest; we may be exposed to great difficulty when we seek to apply them to practical usefulness; but still we may adopt the language before us: *The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* R. S. M'AlI, 1834.

Verse 6. *The LORD preserveth the simple.* The term *simple* equals the "simplicity" of the New

Testament, namely, that pure mind towards God, which, without looking out for help from any other quarter, and free from all dissimulation, expects salvation from him alone. *Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 6. *The simple.* They are such as honestly keep the plain way of God's commandments, without those slights, or creeks of carnal policy, for which men are in the world esteemed wise; see Ge 25:27, where Jacob is called a plain man. Simple or foolish he calls them, because they are generally so esteemed amongst the wise of the world; not that they are so silly as they are esteemed; for if the Lord can judge of wisdom or folly, the only fool is the Atheist and profane person (Ps 14:1); the only wise man in the world is the plain, downright Christian (De 4:6), who keeps himself precisely in all states to that plain, honest course the Lord hath prescribed him. To such simple ones, God's fools, who in their misery and affliction keep them only to the means of deliverance and comfort which the Lord hath prescribed them, belongs this blessing of preservation from mischief, or destruction: so Solomon (Pr 16:17), "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil." "He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul"; see also Pr 19:16,23; for exemplification see in Asa, 2Ch 14:9-12 16:7-9, read the excellent speech of Hanani the seer. *William Slater, 1638.*

Verse 6. *I was brought low.* By affliction and trial. The Hebrew literally means to hang down, to be pendulous, to swing, to wave—as a bucket in a well, or as the slender branches of the palm, the willow, etc. Then it means to be slack, feeble, weak, as in sickness, etc. It probably refers to the prostration of strength by disease. *And he helped me.* He gave me strength; he restored me. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6. *I was brought low, and he helped me.* The word translated "brought low," *ygtld a tld*, properly signifieth to be drawn dry. The metaphor is taken from ponds, or brooks, or rivers that are clean exhausted and dried up, where water utterly faileth. Thus doth Isaiah use this word, "The brooks shall be emptied and dried up," Isa 19:6, *yay wkrhw wld*. Being applied to man, it setteth out such an one as is spent, utterly wasted, for, as we use to speak, clean gone, who hath no ability to help himself, no means of help, no hope of help from others. The other word whereby the succour which God afforded is expressed, and translated "helped" *eyvwhy ab evy*, signifies such help as frees out of danger. It is usually translated "to save." *William Gouge.*

Verse 6. *I was brought low, and he helped me.* Then is the time of help, when men are brought low: and therefore God who does all things in due time when I was brought low, then helped me. Wherefore, O my soul, let it never trouble thee how low soever thou be brought, for when thy state is at the lowest, then is God's assistance at the nearest. We may truly say, God's ways are not as the ways of the world; for in the world when a man is once brought low, he is commonly trampled upon, and nothing is heard then but, "down with him, down to the ground": but with God it is otherwise; for his delight is to raise up them that fall, and when they are brought low, then to help them. Hence it is no such hard case for a man to be brought low, may I not rather say his case is happy? For is it not

better to be brought low, and have God to help him, than to be set aloft and left to help himself? At least, O my body, this may be a comfort to thee: for thou art sure to be brought low, as low as the grave, which is low indeed; yet there thou mayest rest in hope; for even there the Lord will not fail to help thee. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6. *He helped me.* Helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed helped me to wait, else faith had failed. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* The Psalmist had been at a great deal of unrest, and much *off the hooks*, as we say; now, having prayed (for prayer hath *vim pacativam*, a pacifying property), he calls his soul to rest; and rocks it asleep in a spiritual security. Oh, learn this holy art; acquaint thyself with God, acquiesce in him, and be at peace; so shall good be done unto thee. Job 22:21. *Sis Sabbathum Christi.* Luther. *John Trapp.*

Verse 7. Gracious souls rest in God; they and none else. Whatever others may speak of a rest in God, only holy souls know what it means. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, to thy rest in calm and cheerful submission to God's will, delight in his service, satisfaction in his presence, and joy in communion begun with him here below, which is to be perfected above in its full fruition. Holy souls rest in God, and in his will; in his will of precept as their sovereign Lord, whose commands concerning all things are right, and in the keeping of which there is great reward; in his will of providence as their absolute owner, and who does all things well; in himself as their God, their portion, and their chief good, in whom they shall have all that they can need, or are capable of enjoying to complete their blessedness for ever. *Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 7. *Return unto thy rest.* Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy laden, Mt 11:28. Return to thy Noah, his name signifies rest, as the dove when she found no rest returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, "*Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*" *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 7. *Return unto thy rest.* Consider the variety of aspects of that rest which a good man seeks, and the ground upon which he will endeavour to realize it. It consists in,

1. Rest from the perplexities of ignorance, and the wanderings of error.
2. Rest from the vain efforts of self righteousness, and the disquietude of a proud and legal spirit.
3. Rest from the alarms of conscience, and the apprehensions of punishment hereafter.
4. Rest from the fruitless struggles of our degenerate nature, and unaided conflicts with indwelling sin.
5. Rest from the fear of temporal suffering and solicitude arising from the prospect of danger and trial.
6. Rest from the distraction of uncertainty and indecision of mind, and from the fluctuations of undetermined choice. *R. S. M'All.*

Verse 7. *Return, ykwv.* This is the very word which the angel used to Hagar when she fled from her

mistress, "Return, "Ge 16:9. As Hagar through her mistress' rough dealing with her fled from her; so the soul of this prophet by reason of affliction fell from its former quiet confidence in God. As the angel therefore biddeth Hagar "return to her mistress, "so the understanding of this prophet biddeth his soul return to its rest. *William Gouge*.

Verse 7. *Rest.* The word "rest" is put in the plural, as indicating complete and entire rest, at all times, and under all circumstances. *A. Edersheim*.

Verses 7-8. For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. He hath dealt indeed most bountifully with thee, for where thou didst make suit but for one thing, he hath granted thee three. Thou didst ask but to have my soul delivered, and he hath delivered mine eyes and my feet besides; and with a deliverance in each of them the greatest that could be: for what greater deliverance to my soul than to be delivered from death? What greater deliverance to my eyes than to be delivered from tears? What to my feet than to be delivered from falling? That if now, O my soul, thou return not to thy rest, thou wilt show thyself to be most insatiable; seeing thou hast not only more than thou didst ask, but as much indeed as was possible to be asked. But can my soul die? and if not, what bounty is it to deliver my soul from that to which it is not subject? The soul indeed, though immortal, hath yet her ways of dying. It is one kind of death to the soul to be parted from the body, but the truest kind is to be parted from God; and from both these kinds of death he hath delivered my soul. From the first, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness that threatened a dissolution of my soul and body; from the other, by delivering me from the guilt of sin, which threatened a separation from the favour of God; and are not these bounties so great as to give my soul just cause of returning to her rest? *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verses 7, 9. Return unto thy rest, O my soul. . . . *I will walk.* How can these two stand together? *Motus et quies private opponuntur*, saith the philosopher, motion and rest are opposite; now *walking* is a *motion*, as being an act of the locomotive faculty. How then could David *return to his rest* and yet *walk*? You must know that *walking* and *rest* here mentioned, being of a *divine* nature, do not oppose each other; *spiritual rest* maketh no man *idle*, and therefore it is no enemy to walking; *spiritual walking* maketh no man *weary*, and therefore it is no enemy to rest. Indeed, they are so far from being opposite that they are subservient to each other, and it is hard to say whether that *rest* be the *cause* of this *walking*, or this *walking* a *cause* of that *rest*. Indeed, both are true, since he that *rests in God* cannot but *walk before him*, and by *walking before*, we come to *rest in God*. *Returning to rest* is an act of *confidence*, since there is no rest to be had but in God, nor in God but by believing affiance in, and reliance on him. *Walking before God* is an act of *obedience*; when we disobey we wander and go astray, only by obedience we walk. Now these two are so far from being enemies, that they are companions and ever go together; confidence being a means to quicken obedience, and obedience to strengthen confidence. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Verse 8. *Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* Lo, here a deliverance, not from one, but many dangers, to wit, "death, ""tears, ""falling." Single deliverances are as threads; but when multiplied, they become as a cord twisted of many threads, more potent to draw us to God. Any one mercy is as a link, but many favours are as a chain consisting of several links, to bind us the closer to our duty; *vis unita fortior*. Frequent droppings of the rain cannot but make an impression even on the stone, and renewed mercies may well prevail with the stony heart. Parisiensis relates a story of a man whom (notwithstanding his notorious and vicious courses) God was pleased to accumulate favours upon, so that at last he cried out, "*Vicisti, benignissime Deus, indefatigabili sua bonitate*, Most gracious God, thy unwearied goodness hath overcome my obstinate wickedness"; and from that time devoted himself to God's service. No wonder, then, if David upon deliverance from such numerous and grievous afflictions, maketh this his resolve, to "*walk before the Lord in the land of the living.*" *Nathanael Hardy*

Verse 8. As an humble and sensible soul will pack up many troubles in one, so a thankful soul will divide one mercy into sundry particular branches, as here the Psalmist distinguishes, the delivery of his soul from death, of his eyes from tears, and of his feet from falling. *David Dickson*.

Verse 8. Some distinguish the three particulars thus: *He hath delivered my soul from death*, by giving me a good conscience; *mine eyes from tears*, by giving a quiet conscience; *my feet from falling*, by giving an enlightened and assured conscience. *William Gouge*.

Verse 8. *My feet from falling.* Whether means he, into penal misery and mischief, or into sin? There is a *lapsus moralis*, as 1Co 10:12. Err I? or would David here be understood of sinning? So Ps 73:2: "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." And if I be not deceived, the text leans to that meaning, rising still from the less to the greater. First. It is more bounty to be kept from grief than from death, for there is a greater enlargement from misery. It is not more bounty to be kept from the sense of affliction than to be kept from death, which is the greatest of temporal evils; but it is more bounty in a gracious eye to be kept from sin than from death. Secondly. *How his eyes from tears?* If not kept from sin? That had surely cost him many a tear, as Peter (Mt 26:75). But understand it *de lapsu morali*, so the gradation still riseth to enlarge God's bounty: yea, which I count the greatest blessing, in these afflictions he kept me steady in my course of piety, and suffered not afflictions to sway my heart from him. Still, in a gracious eye, the benefit seems greater to be delivered from sinning than from the greatest outward affliction. This is the reason Paul (Ro 8:37) triumphs over all afflictions. 2Co 11:22-33 and 2Co 12:1-10. He counts them his glory, his crown; but speaking of the prevailing of corruption in particular, he bemoans himself as the most miserable man alive. Ro 7:24. *William Slater*.

Verse 9. *I will walk*, etc. It is a holy resolution which this verse records. The previous verse had mentioned among the mercies vouchsafed, "Thou hast delivered my feet from falling"; and the first

use of the restored limb is, *I will walk before the LORD*. It reminds me of the crippled beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, to whom Peter had said, "In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk"; and "immediately his ankle bones received strength, and he leaping up stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." It is a very sure mark of a grateful heart to employ the gift to the praise of the giver, in such a manner as he would most wish it to be employed. *Barton Bouchier*.

Verse 9. When you, my soul, return to this rest, thou shalt walk in order that thou mayest have some exercise in thy rest, that thy resting may not make thee restive. *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*. For now that my feet are delivered from falling, how can I better employ them than in walking? Were they delivered from falling that they should stand still and be idle? No, my soul, but to encourage me to walk: and where is so good walking as in the land of the living Alas! what walking is it in the winter, when all things are dead, when the very grass lies buried under ground, and scarce anything that has life in it is to be seen? But then is the pleasant walking, when nature spreads her green carpet to walk upon, and then it is the land of the living, when the trees shew they live, by bringing forth, if not fruits, at least leaves; when the valleys shew they live, by bringing forth sweet flowers to delight the smell, at least fresh grass to please the eyes. But is this the walking in the land of the living that David means? O my soul, to walk in the land of the living is to walk in the paths of righteousness: for there is no such death to the soul as sin, no such cause of tears to the eyes as guiltiness of conscience, no such falling of the feet as to fall from God: and therefore, to say the truth, the soul can never return to its rest if we walk not within in the paths of righteousness; and we cannot well say whether this rest be a cause of the walk, or the walking be a cause of the resting: but this we may say, they are certainly companions the one to the other, which is in effect but this—that justification can never be without sanctification. Peace of conscience, and godliness of life, can never be one without the other. Or is it perhaps that David means that land of the living where Enoch and Elias are living, with the living God? But if he mean so, how can he speak so confidently, and say, "*I will walk in the land of the living*"? as though he could come to walk there by his own strength, or at his own pleasure? He therefore gives his reason: "*I believed, and therefore I spake*", "for the voice of faith is strong, and speaks with confidence; and because in faith he believes that he should come to walk in the land of the living, therefore with confidence he speaks it, *I will walk in the land of the living*." *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living*, i.e., I shall pass the whole of my life under his fatherly care and protection. The prophet has regard to the custom of men, and chiefly of parents: for those who ardently love their children have them always in their thoughts and carry them there, never ceasing from care and anxiety about them, but being always attentive to their safety. *Omnis enim in natis chari stat cura parentis*. Children are, therefore, said to walk before and in the

sight of their parents, because they have them as constant guardians of their health and safety. Thus also the godly in this life walk before God, that is to say, are defended by his care and protection. *Mollerus.*

Verse 9. *I will walk before the LORD.* According to a different reading of the first word, "*I shall,*" and, "*I will,*" the clause puts on several senses; if read "*I shall walk,*" they are words of *confident expectation*; if "*I will,*" they are words of *obedient resolution*. According to the former, the Psalmist promises somewhat to himself from God; according to the latter, he promises somewhat of himself to God. Both these constructions are probable and profitable. "*Before God*"; that is, in his service; or, "*before God,*" that is, under his care. Let us consider both senses.

1. *I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living*; that is, by continuing in this world, I shall have opportunity of doing God service. It was not because those holy men had less assurance of God's love than we, but because they had greater affections to God's service than we, that this life was so amiable in their eyes. To this purpose the reasonings of David and Hezekiah concerning death and the grave are very observable. "Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth"? so David, Ps 30:9. "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee"; so Hezekiah, Isa 38:18. They saw death would render them useless for God's honour, and therefore they prayed for life. It lets us see why a religious man may desire life, that he may *walk before the LORD*, and minister to him in the place wherein he hath set him. Indeed, that joy, hope, and desire of life which is founded upon this consideration is not only lawful, but commendable; and truly herein is a vast difference between the wicked and the godly. To walk in the land of the living is the wicked man's desire, yea, were it possible he would walk here for ever; but for what end? only to enjoy his lusts, have his fill of pleasure, and increase his wealth: whereas the godly man's aim in desiring to live is that he may "*walk before God,*" advance his glory, and perform his service. Upon this account it is that one hath fitly taken notice how David doth not say, I shall now satiate myself with delights in my royal city, but, *I shall walk before the LORD in the land of the living.*

2. And most suitably to this interpretation, this "*before the LORD,*" means *under the Lord's careful eye*. The words according to the Hebrew may be read, *before the face of the LORD*, by which is meant his presence, and that not general, before which all men walk, but special, before which only good men walk. Indeed, in this sense *God's face* is as much as his favour; and as to be cast out of his sight is to be under his anger, so to walk before his face is to be in favour with him: so that the meaning is, as the Psalmist had said, I shall live securely and safely in this world under the careful protection of the Almighty; and this is the confidence which he here seemeth to utter with so much joy, that God's gracious providence should watch over him the remainder of his days. Nathanael Hardy, in a Sermon entitled "*Thankfulness in Grain,*" 1654.

Verse 9. *In the land of the living.* These words admit of a threefold interpretation, being understood

by some, especially for the land of Judea. By others, erroneously for the Jerusalem which is above. By the most, and most probably, for this habitable earth, the present world.

1. That exposition which Cajetan, Lorinus, with others, give of the words, would not be rejected, who conceive that by *the land of the living* David here meaneth Judea, in which, or rather over which being constituted king, he resolves to walk before God, and do him service. This is not improbably that "*land of the living*" in which the Psalmist when an exile "believed to see the goodness of the Lord"; this is certainly that "land of the living" wherein God promises to "set his glory"; nor was this title without just reason appropriated to that country. (a) *Partly*, because it was a "*land*" which afforded the most plentiful supports and comforts of natural life, in regard of the wholesomeness of the climate, the goodness of the soil, the overflowing of milk and honey, with other conveniences both for food and delight. (b) *Chiefly*, because it was the "*land*" in which the living God was worshipped, and where he vouchsafed to place his name; whereas the other parts of the world worshipped lifeless things, of which the Psalmist saith, "They have mouths, and speak not; eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not."

2. *The land of the living* is construed by the ancients to be that *heavenly country*, the place of the blessed. Indeed, this appellation does most fitly agree with heaven: this world is *desertum mortuorum*, a desert of dead, at least, dying men; that only is *regio virorum*, a region of living saints. "He who is our life" is in heaven, yea, "our life is hid with him in God, "and therefore we cannot be said to live till we come thither. In this sense no doubt that devout bishop and martyr, Babilas, used the words, who being condemned by Numerianus, the emperor, to an unjust death, a little before his execution repeated this and the two preceding verses, with a loud voice. Nor is it unfit for any dying saint to comfort himself with the like application of these words, and say in a confident hope of that blessed sight, *I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living*.

3. But doubtless the literal and proper meaning of these words is of *David's abode in the world*; during which time, wheresoever he should be, he would "*walk before God*"; for that seems to be the emphasis of the plural number, lands, according to the original. The world consists of many countries, several lands, and it is possible for men either by force, or unwillingly, to remove from one country to another: but a good man when he changeth his country, yet altereth not his religion, yea, wherever he is he resolves to serve his God. *Nathaniel Hardy*.

Verse 9. *Land of the living*. How unmeet, how shameful, how odious a thing is it that dead men should be here on the face of the earth, which is "*the land of the living*." That there are such is too true. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth, "1Ti 5:6; Sardis had a name that she lived, but was dead, Re 3:1; "The dead bury their dead, "Mt 8:22; all natural men are "dead in sins, " Eph 2:1 2Co 5:14. *William Gouge*.

Verses 9, 12, etc. The Hebrew word that is rendered *walk*, signifies a continued action, or the

reiteration of an action. David resolves that he will not only take a turn or two with God, or walk a pretty way with God, as Orpah did with Ruth, and then take his leave of God, as Orpah did of her mother, Ru 1:10-15; but he resolves, whatever comes on it, that he will walk constantly, resolutely, and perpetually before God; or before the face of the Lord. Now, walking before the face of the Lord doth imply a very exact, circumspect, accurate, and precise walking before God; and indeed, no other walking is either suitable or pleasing to the eye of God. But is this all that he will do upon the receipt of such signal mercies? Oh no! for he resolves to take the cup of salvation, and to call upon the name of the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, Ps 116:13, 17. But is this all that he will do? Oh, no! for he resolves that he will presently pay his vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people, Ps 116:14, 18. But is this all that he will do? Oh, no! for he resolves that he will love the Lord better than ever and more than ever, Ps 116:1-2. He loved God before with a real love, but having now received such rare mercies from God, he is resolved to love God with a more raised love, and with a more inflamed love, and with a more active and stirring love, and with a more growing and increasing love than ever. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* It is not sufficient to believe, unless you also openly confess before unbelievers, tyrants, and all others. Next to believing follows confession; and therefore, those who do not make a confession ought to fear; as, on the contrary, those should hope who speak out what they have believed. *Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* That is to say, I firmly believe what I say, therefore I make no scruple of saying it. This should be connected with the preceding verse, and the full stop should be placed at "spoken." *Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 10. *I believed, etc.* Some translate the words thus: "*I believed when I said, I am greatly afflicted: I believed when I said in my haste, all men are liars*"; *q.d.*, Though I have had my *offs* and my *ons*, though I have passed through several frames of heart and tempers of soul in my trials, yet I believed still, I never let go my hold, my grip of God, in my perturbation. *John Trapp.*

Verse 10. The heart and tongue should go together. The tongue should always be the heart's interpreter, and the heart should always be the tongue's suggester; what is spoken with the tongue should be first stamped upon the heart and wrought off from it. Thus it should be in all our communications and exhortations, especially when we speak or exhort about the things of God, and dispense the mysteries of heaven. David spake froth his heart when he spake from his faith. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Believing is an act of the heart, "with the heart man believeth"; so that to say, "*I believed, therefore have I spoken*," is as if he had said, I would never have spoken these things, if my heart had not been clear and upright in them. The apostle takes up that very protestation from David (2Co 4:13): "According as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak"; that is, we move others to believe nothing but what

we believe, and are fully assured of ourselves. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 10. *I was greatly afflicted.* After that our minstrel hath made mention of faith and of speaking the word of God, whereby are to be understood all good works that proceed and come forth out of faith, he now singeth of the cross, and sheweth that he was very sore troubled, grievously threatened, uncharitably blasphemed, evil reported, maliciously persecuted, cruelly troubled, and made to suffer all kinds of torments for uttering and declaring the word of God. "*I believed,*" saith he, "*therefore have I spoken; but I was very sore troubled.*" Christ's word and the cross are companions inseparable. As the shadow followeth the body, so doth the cross follow the word of Christ: and as fire and heat cannot be separated, so cannot the gospel of Christ and the cross be plucked asunder. *Thomas Becon (1511-1567 or 1570).*

Verses 10-11. The meaning seems to be this—I spake as I have declared (Ps 116:4) because I trusted in God. I was greatly afflicted, I was in extreme distress, I was in great astonishment and trembling (as the word rendered "*haste*" signifies trembling as well as haste, as it is rendered in De 20:3;) and in these circumstances I did not trust in man; I said, "*all men are liars*"—*i.e.*, not fit to be trusted in; those that will fail and deceive the hopes of those who trust in them, agreeable to Ps 62:8-9. *Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 11. *I said in my haste, All men are liars,* Rather, in an ecstasy of despair, I said, the whole race of man is a delusion. *Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 11. *All men are liars.* That is to say, every man who speaks in the ordinary manner of men concerning happiness, and sets great value on the frail and perishable things of this world, is a liar; for true and solid happiness is not to be found in the country of the living. This explanation solves the sophism proposed by St. Basil. If every man be a liar, then David was a liar; therefore he lies when he says, every man is a liar—thus contradicting himself, and destroying his own position. This is answered easily; for when David spoke he did so not as man, but from an Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. *Robert Bellantaine.*

Verse 11. *All men are liars.* Juvenal said, "Dare to do something worthy of transportation and imprisonment, if you mean to be of consequence. Honesty is praised, but starves." A pamphlet was published some time ago with the title, "*Whom shall we hang?*" A very appropriate one might *now* be written with a slight change in the title—"Whom shall we trust?" From "*A New Dictionary of Quotations,*" 1872.

Verses 11-15. It seems that to give the lie was not so heinous an offence in David's time as it is in these days; for else how durst he have spoken such words, *That all men are liars,* which is no less than to give the lie to the whole world? and yet no man, I think, will challenge him for saying so; no more than challenge St. John for saying that all men are sinners, and indeed how should any man avoid being a liar, seeing the very being of man is itself a lie? not only is it a vanity, and put in the

balance less than vanity; but a very lie, promising great matters, and able to do just nothing, as Christ saith, "without me ye can do nothing": and so Christ seems to come in, to be David's second, and to make his word good, that *all men are liars*. And now let the world do its worst, and take the lie how it will, for David having Christ on his side, will always be able to make his part good against all the world, for Christ hath overcome the world.

But though all men may be said to be liars, yet not all men in all things; for then David himself should be a liar in this: but all men perhaps in something or other, at some time or other, in some kind or other. Absolute truth is not found in any man, but in that man only who was not man only; for if he had been but so, it had not perhaps been found in him neither, seeing absolute truth and deity are as relatives, never found to be asunder.

But in what thing is it that all men should be liars? Indeed, in this for one; to think that God regards not, and loves not them whom he suffers to be afflicted; for we may rather think he loves them most whom he suffers to be most afflicted; and we may truly say he would never have suffered his servant Job to be afflicted so exceeding cruelly, if he had not loved him exceeding tenderly; for there is nothing lost by suffering afflictions. No, my soul, they do but serve to make up the greater weight of glory, when it shall be revealed.

But let God's afflictions be what they can be, yet I will always acknowledge they can never be in any degree so great as his benefits: and oh, that *I could think of something that I might render to him for all his benefits*: for shall I receive such great, such infinite benefits from him, and shall I render nothing to him by way of gratefulness? But, alas, what have I to render? All my rendering to him will be but taking more from him: for all I can do is but *take the cup of salvation, and call upon his name*, and what rendering is there in this taking? If I could take the cup of tribulation, and drink it off for his sake, this might be a rendering of some value; but this, God knows, is no work for me to do. It was his work, who said, "Can ye drink of the cup, of which I shall drink?" Indeed, he drank of the cup of tribulation, to the end that we might take the cup of salvation; but then in taking it we must call upon his name; upon his name and upon no other; for else we shall make it a cup of condemnation, seeing there is no name under heaven, in which we may be saved, but only the name of Jesus.

Yet it may be some rendering to the Lord if I pay my vows, and do, as it were, my penance openly; *I will therefore pay my vows to the Lord, in the presence of all his people*. But might he not pay his vows as well in his closet, between God and himself, as to do it publicly? No, my soul, it serves not his turn, but he must pay them in the presence of all his people; yet not to the end he should be applauded for a just payer; for though he pay them, yet he can never pay them to the full; but to the end, that men seeing his good works, may glorify God by his example. And the rather perhaps, for that David was a king, and the king's example prevails much with the people, to make them pay their vows to God: but most of all, that by this means David's piety may not be barren, but may make a

breed of piety in the people also: which may be one mystical reason why it was counted a curse in Israel to be barren; for he that pays not his vows to God in the presence of his people may well be said to be barren in Israel, seeing he begets no children to God by his example. And perhaps, also, the vows which David means here were the doing of some mean things, unfit in show for the dignity of a king; as when it was thought a base thing in him to dance before the ark; he then vowed he would be baser yet: and in this case, to pay his vows before the people becomes a matter of necessity: for as there is no honour to a man whilst he is by himself alone, so there is no shame to a man but before the people: and therefore to shew that he is not ashamed to do any thing how mean soever, so it may tend to the glorifying of God; *"he will pay his vows in the presence of all his people."* And he will do it though it cost him his life, for if he die for it he knows that *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. But that which is precious is commonly desired: and doth God then desire the death of his saints? He desires, no doubt, that death of his saints which is to die to sin: but for any other death of his saints, it is therefore said to be precious in his sight, because he lays it up with the greater carefulness. And for this it is there are such several mansions in God's house, that to them whose death is precious in his sight he may assign the most glorious mansions. This indeed is the reward of martyrdom, and the encouragement of martyrs, though their sufferings be most insufferable, their troubles most intolerable; yet this makes amends for all; that *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."* For if it be so great a happiness to be acceptable in his sight, how great a happiness must it be to be precious in his sight? When God, at the creation looked upon all his works, it is said he saw them to be all exceeding good: but it is not said that any of them were precious in his sight. How then comes death to be precious in his sight, that was none of his works, but is a destroyer of his works? Is it possible that a thing which destroys his creatures should have a title of more value in his sight, than his creatures themselves? O, my soul, this is one of the miracles of his saints, and perhaps one of those which Christ meant, when he said to his apostles, that greater miracles than he did they should do themselves: for what greater miracle than this, that death, which of itself is a thing most vile in the sight of God, yet once embraced by his saints, as it were by their touch only, becomes precious in his sight? To alter a thing from being vile to be precious, is it not a greater miracle than to turn water into wine? Indeed so it is; death doth not damnify his saints, but his saints do dignify death. Death takes nothing away from his saints' happiness, but his saints add lustre to death's vileness. It is happy for death that ever it met with any of God's saints; for there was no way for it else in the world, to be ever had in any account: but why say I, in the world? For it is of no account in the world for all this: it is but only in the sight of God; but indeed this only is all in all; for to be precious in God's sight is more to be prized than the world itself. For when the world shall pass away, and all the glory of it be laid in the dust; then shall trophies be erected for the death of his saints: and when all monuments of the world shall be utterly defaced, and all records quite rased out;

yet the death of his saints shall stand registered still, in fair red letters in the calendar of heaven. If there be glory laid up for them that die in the Lord; much more shall they be glorified that die for the Lord.

I have wondered oftentimes, why God will suffer his saints to die; I mean not the death natural, for I know *statutum est omnibus semel mori*; but the death that is by violence, and with torture: for who could endure to see them he loves so cruelly handled? But now I see the reason of it; for, *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*. And what marvel then if he suffer his saints to die; when by dying they are wrought, and made fit jewels to be set in his cabinet; for as God has a bottle which he fills up with the tears of his saints, so I may say he hath a cabinet which he decks up with the deaths of his saints: and, O my soul, if thou couldest but comprehend what a glory it is to serve for a jewel in the decking up of God's cabinet, thou wouldest never wonder why he suffers his saints to be put to death, though with never so great torments, for it is but the same which Saint Paul saith: "The afflictions of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." *Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 12. *What shall I render unto the LORD?* Rendering to the true God, in a true and right manner, is the sum of true religion. This notion is consonant to the scriptures: thus: "Render unto God the things that are God's." Mt 22:21. As true loyalty is a giving to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, so true piety is the giving to God the things that are God's. And so, in that parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, all we owe to God is expressed by the *rendering the fruit of the vineyard*; Mt 21:41. Particular acts of religion are so expressed in the Scriptures, Ps 56:12; Ho 14:2 2Ch 34:31. Let this, then, be the import of David's *xwhyl kyva xm*, "*What shall I render unto the LORD?*" "In what things, and by what means, shall I promote religion in the exercise thereof? How shall I show myself duly religious towards him who hath been constantly and abundantly munificent in his benefits towards me?" *Henry Hurst*.

Verse 12. *All his benefits toward me.* What reward shall we give unto the Lord, for all the benefits he hath bestowed? From the cheerless gloom of nonexistence he waked us into being; he ennobled us with understanding; he taught us arts to promote the means of life; he commanded the prolific earth to yield its nurture; he bade the animals to own us as their lords. For us the rains descend; for us the sun sheddeth abroad its creative beams; the mountains rise, the valleys bloom, affording us grateful habitation and a sheltering retreat. For us the rivers flow; for us the fountains murmur; the sea opens its bosom to admit our commerce; the earth exhausts its stores; each new object presents a new enjoyment; all nature pouring her treasures at our feet, through the bounteous grace of him who wills that all be ours. *Basil, 326-379*.

Verse 12. *All his benefits.* As partial obedience is not good, so partial thanks is worthless: not that any saint is able to keep all the commands, or reckon up all the mercies of God, much less return

particular acknowledgment for every single mercy; but as he "hath respect unto all the commandments" (Ps 119:6), so he desires to value highly every mercy, and to his utmost power give God the praise of all. An honest soul would not conceal any debt he owes to God, but calls upon itself to give an account for all his benefits. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music; unthankfulness for one mercy disparages our thanks for the rest. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 13. *I will take the cup of salvation.*—It may probably allude to the libation offering, Nu 28:7; for the three last verses seem to intimate that the Psalmist was now at the temple, offering the meat offering, drink offering, and sacrifices to the Lord. "*Cup*" is often used by the Hebrews to denote plenty or abundance. So, "the cup of trembling, "an abundance of *misery*; "the cup of salvation, "an abundance of *happiness*. *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13. *Cup of salvation.* In holy Scripture there is mention made of drink offerings, Ge 25:14 Le 23:13 Nu 15:5; which were a certain quantity of wine that used to be poured out before the Lord; as the very notation of the word imports, coming from a root *dmg*, *effudit*, that signifieth to pour out. As the meat offerings, so the drink offerings, were brought to the Lord in way of gratulation and thanksgiving. Some therefore in allusion hereunto so expound the text, as a promise and vow of the Psalmist, to testify his public gratitude by such an external and solemn rite as in the law was prescribed. This he terms *a cup*, because that drink offering was contained in a cup and poured out thereof; and he adds this epithet, "salvation, "because that rite was an acknowledgment of salvation, preservation and deliverance from the Lord. After their solemn gratulatory sacrifices they were wont to have a feast. When David had brought the ark of God into the tabernacle, they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, which being finished, "he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." 1Ch 16:8. Hereby is implied that he made so beautiful a feast, as he had to give thereof to all the people there assembled. In this feast the master thereof was wont to take a great cup, and in lifting it up to declare the occasion of that feast, and then in testimony of thankfulness to drink thereof to the guests, that they in order might pledge him. This was called a cup of salvation, or deliverance, because they acknowledged by the use thereof that God had saved and delivered them. Almost in a like sense the apostle styles the sacramental cup, the cup of blessing. Here the prophet useth the plural number, thus, "cup of *salvations*, "whereby, after the Hebrew elegancy, he meaneth many deliverances, one after another; or some great and extraordinary deliverance which was instead of many, or which comprised many under it. The word translated *take* (*ava a avg*) properly signifieth to lift up, and in that respect may the more fitly be applied to the aforementioned taking of the festival cup and lifting it up before the guests. Most of our later expositors of this Psalm apply this phrase, "I will take the cup of salvation, "to the forenamed gratulatory drink offering, or to the taking and lifting up of the cup of blessing in the feast, after the solemn sacrifice. Both of these import one and the same thing, which

is, that saints of old were wont to testify their gratefulness for great deliverances with some outward solemn rite. *William Gouge*.

Verse 13. *Cup of salvation.* *Yeshuoth*:Ps 18:50 28:8 53:6. The cup of salvation, symbolized by the eucharistic cup of the Passover Supper.—Zion that had drunk of the "cup of trembling" (Isa 51:17, 22) might now rise and drink of the cup of salvation. To the church these words have had a yet deeper significance added to them by Mt 26:27. Jesus, on that Passover night, drank of the bitter wine of God's wrath, that he might refill the cup with joy and health for his people. *William Kay*.

Verses 13-14, 17-19. A fit mode of expressing our thanks to God is by solemn acts of worship, secret, social, and public. "The closet will be the first place where the heart will delight in pouring forth its lively joys; thence the feeling will extend to the family altar: and thence again it will proceed to the sanctuary of the Most High." (*J. Morison*). To every man God has sent a large supply of benefits, and nothing but perverseness can deny to him the praise of our lips. *William, S. Plumer*.

Verse 14. A man that would have his credit as to the truth of his word kept up, would choose those to be witnesses of his performing who were witnesses of his promising. I think David took this heed in his rendering and paying his vows: "*I will do it*," saith he, "*now in the presence of all his people*." The people were witnesses to his straits, prayers, and vows; and he will honour religion by performing in their sight what he sealed, signed, and delivered as his vow to the Lord. Seek not more witnesses than providence makes conscious of thy vows, lest this be interpreted ostentation and vain self glorying: take so many, lest the good example be lost, or thou suspected of falsifying thy vow. Briefly and plainly: Didst thou on a sick bed make thy vow before thy family, and before the neighbourhood? Be careful to perform it before them; let them see thou art what thou vowedst to be. This care in thy vow will be a means to make it most to the advantage of religion, whilst all that heard or knew thy vow bear thee testimony that thou art thankful, and thus thou givest others occasion to glorify thy Father who is in heaven. *Henry Hurst* (1690) in "*The Morning Exercises*."

Verse 14. *I will pay my vows*, etc. Foxe, in his Acts and Monuments, relates the following concerning the martyr, John Philpot:—"He went with the sheriffs to the place of execution; and when he was entering into Smithfield the way was foul, and two officers took him up to bear him to the stake. Then he said merrily, What, will ye make me a pope? I am content to go to my journey's end on foot. But first coming into Smithfield, he kneeled down there, saying these words, *I will pay my vows in thee, O Smithfield*."

Verse 15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*. It is of value or importance in such respects as the following:—(1) As it is the removal of another of the redeemed to glory—the addition of one more to the happy hosts above; (2) as it is a new triumph of the work of redemption,—allowing the power and the value of that work; (3) as it often furnishes a more direct proof of the reality of religion than any abstract argument could do. How much has the cause of

religion been promoted by the patient deaths of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the hosts of martyrs! What does not the world owe, and the cause of religion owe, to such scenes as occurred on the deathbeds of Baxter, and Thomas Scott, and Halyburton, and Payson! What an argument for the truth of religion,—what an illustration of its sustaining power,—what a source of comfort to those who are about to die,—to reflect that religion does not leave the believer when he most needs its support and consolation; that it can sustain us in the severest trial of our condition here; that it can illuminate what seems to us of all places *most* dark, cheerless, dismal, repulsive—"the valley of the shadow of death." *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.* The death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight. First, because *he "seeth not as man seeth."* He judgeth not according to the appearance; he sees all things as they really are, not partially: he traces the duration of his people, not upon the map of time, but upon the infinite scale of eternity; he weighs their happiness, not in the little balance of earthly enjoyment, but in the even and equipoised balance of the sanctuary. In the next place, I think the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, because *they are taken from the evil to come*; they are delivered from the burden of the flesh; ransomed by the blood of the Redeemer, they are his purchased possession, and now he receives them to himself. Sin and sorrow for ever cease; there is no more death, the death of Christ is their redemption; by death he overcame him that had the power of death; therefore, they in him are enabled to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Again, the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, for in it *he often sees the very finest evidences of the work of his own Spirit upon the soul*; he sees faith in opposition to sense, leaning upon the promises of God. Reposing upon him who is mighty to save, he sees hope even against hope, anchoring the soul secure and steadfast on him who is passed within the veil; he sees patience acquiescing in a Father's will—humility bending beneath his sovereign hand—love issuing from a grateful heart. Again, the death of the saints is precious in the Lord's sight, *as it draws out the tenderness of surviving Christian friends*, and is abundant in the thanksgivings of many an anxious heart; it elicits the sympathies of Christian charity, and realises that communion of saints, of which the Apostle speaks, when he says, "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one rejoice they all joy."... The death of saints is precious, because the sympathy of prayer is poured forth from many a kindly Christian heart... Nor is this all—the death of saints is precious, for *that is their day of seeing Jesus face to face.* *Patrick Pouden's Sermon in "The Irish Pulpit," 1831.*

Verse 15. *Precious.* Their death is precious (*jakar*); the word of the text is, *in pretio fuit, magni estimatum est.* See how the word is translated in other texts.

1. Honourable, Isa 43:4 (*jakarta*); "thou was precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."
2. Much set by, 1Sa 18:80: "His name was much set by."
3. Dear, Jer 31:20. *An filius (jakkir) pretiosus mihi Ephraim:* "Is Ephraim my dear son?"

4. Splendid, clear, or glorious, Job 31:10. *Si vidi lunam (jaker) pretiosam et abeuntem*: "the moon walking in brightness."

Put all these expressions together, and then we have the strength of David's word, "*The death of the saints is precious*"; that is, (1) honourable; (2) much set by; (3) dear; (4) splendid and glorious in the sight of the Lord. Samuel Totshell, in "*The House of Mourning*," 1660.

Verse 15. Precious. It is proper to advert, in the first place, to the apparent primary import of the phrase, namely, *Almighty God watches over, and sets a high value upon the holy and useful lives of his people*, and will not lightly allow these lives to be abbreviated or destroyed. In the second place, the words lead us to advert to *the control which he exercises over the circumstances of their death*. These are under his special arrangement. They are too important in his estimation to be left to accident. In fact, chance has no existence. In the intervention of second causes, he takes care always to overrule and control them for good. Let the weakest believer among you be quite sure, be "confident of this very thing, "that he will never suffer your great enemy to take advantage of anything in the manner of your death, to do you spiritual harm. No, on the contrary, he takes all its circumstances under his immediate and especial disposal. This sentiment will admit, perhaps, of a third illustration; *when the saints are dying, the Lord looks upon them, and is merciful unto them*. Who can say how often he answers prayer, even in the cases of dying believers? Never does he fail to support, even where he does not see good to spare. By the whispers of his love, by the witness of his Spirit, by the assurance of his presence, by the preparatory revelation of heavenly glory, he strengthens his afflicted ones, he makes all their bed in their sickness. Ah! and when, perhaps, they scarcely possess a bed to languish upon, when poverty or other calamitous circumstances leave them, in the sorrow of sickness, no place of repose but the bare ground for their restless bodies, and his bosom for their spirits, do they ever find God fail them? No; many a holy man has slept the sleep of death with the missionary Martyr, in a strange and inhospitable land, or with the missionary Smith, upon the floor of a dungeon, and yet

"Jesus has made their dying bed

As soft as downy pillows are."

When no other eye saw, when no other heart felt, for these two never to be forgotten martyrs, murdered men of God, and apostles of Jesus, then were they precious in God's sight, and he was present with them. And so it is with all his saints, who are faithful unto death. Fourthly, we are warranted by the text and the tenor of Scripture, in affirming that *the Lord attaches great importance to the deathbed itself*. This is in his estimate—whatever it may be in ours—too precious, too important, to be overlooked; and hence it is often with emphasis, though always with a practical bearing, recorded in Scripture. It is possible, certainly, to make too much of it, by substituting, as a criterion of character, that which may be professed under the excitement of dying sufferings, for the

testimony of a uniform, conspicuous career of holy living. But it is equally indefensible, and even ungrateful to God, to make too little of it, to make too little account of a good end, when connected with a good beginning and with a patient continuance in well doing.

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate

Is privileged beyond the common walk of virtuous life."

Its transactions are sometimes as fraught with permanent utility as with present good. The close of a Christian's career on earth, his defiance, in the strength of his Saviour, of his direst enemy, the good confession which he acknowledges when he is enabled to witness before those around his dying bed, all these are precious and important in the sight of the Lord, and ought to be so in our view, and redound, not only to his own advantage, but to the benefit of survivors, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." *W. M. Bunting, in a Sermon at the City Road Chapel, 1836.*

Verse 15. Why need they beforehand be afraid of death, who have the Lord to take such care about it as he doth? We may safely, without presuming, we ought securely without wavering, to rest upon this, that our blood being precious in God's eyes, either it shall not be split, or it is seasonable, and shall be profitable to us to have it split. On this ground "the righteous are bold as a lion," Pr 28:1. "Neither do they fear what man can do unto them." Heb 13:6. Martyrs were, without question, well instructed herein, and much supported hereby. When fear of death hindereth from any duty, or draweth to any evil, then call to mind this saying, "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his favourites.*" For who would not valiantly, without fainting, take such a death as is precious in God's sight? *William Gouge.*

Verse 15. *His saints* imports *appropriation*. Elsewhere Jehovah asserts, "All souls are mine." But he has an especial property in—and therefore claim upon—all saints. It is he that made them such. Separate from God there could be no sanctity. And as his right, his original right, in all men, is connected with the facts of their having been created and endowed by his hand, and thence subjected to his moral government, so, and much more, do all holy beings, all holy men, who owe to his grace their very existence as such, who must cease to be saints, if they could cease to be his saints, whom he has created anew in Christ Jesus by the communication of his own love, his own purity, his own nature, whom he continually upholds in this exalted state, so, and much more, do such persons belong to God. They are "*his saints*," through him and in him, saints of his making, and modelling, and establishing, and therefore *his* exclusively. Let this reference to the mighty working of God by his Spirit in you, your connection, your spiritual connection, with him, and your experience of his saving power,—let this reference convert the *mystery* into the *mercy* of sanctification in your hearts.

"*His saints*" denotes, in the second place, *devotedness*. They are saints not only *through* him, but *to* him; holy unto the Lord, sanctified or set apart to his service, self surrendered to the adorable

Redeemer.

"*His saints*" may import *resemblance*—close resemblance. Such characters are emphatically *God like*, holy and pure; children of their Father which is in heaven; certifying to all around their filial relationship to him, by their manifest participation of his nature, by their reflection of his image and likeness.

"*His saints*" suggests associations of *endearment*, of complacency. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in all them that hope in his mercy"; "a people near unto him"; "the Lord's portion is his people"; and "Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." *Condensed from a Scranton by W. M. Bunting, 1836.*

Verse 15. *Saints.* The persons among whom implicitly he reckons himself, styled *saints*, are in the original set out by a word (Mydymx) that imports an especial respect of God towards them. The root whence that word issueth signifieth *mercy* (dmx *consecravit, benefecit*). Whereupon the Hebrews have given such a name to a stork, which kind among fowls is the most merciful; and that not only the old to their young ones, as most are, but also the young ones to the old, which they use to feed and carry when through age they are not able to help themselves. This title is attributed to men in a double respect;

1. Passively, in regard of God's mind and affection to them;
2. Actively, in regard of their mind and affection to others. God's merciful kindness is great towards them; and their mercy and kindness are great towards their brethren. They are, therefore, by a kind of excellency and property styled "men of mercy." Isa 57:1. In regard of this double acceptation of the word, some translate it, "merciful, tender, or courteous," Ps 18:25. Others with a paraphrase with many words, because they have not one fit word to express the full sense, thus, "Those whom God followeth with bounty, or to whom God extendeth his bounty." This latter I take to be the most proper to this place; for the word being passively taken for such as are made partakers of God's kindness, it sheweth the reason of that high account wherein God hath them, even his own grace and favour. We have a word in English that in this passive signification fitly answereth the Hebrew, which is this, favourite. *William Gouge.*

Verse 15. *Death* now, as he hath done also to mine, has paid full many a visit to your house; and in very deed, he has made fell havoc among our comforts. We shall yet be avenged on this enemy—this King of Terrors. I cannot help at times clenching my fist in his face, and roaring out in my agony and anguish, "Thou shalt be swallowed up in victory!" There is even, too, in the meantime, this consolation; "O Death, where is thy sting?" "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death *for* his saints, "in the first place; in the second place, and resting on the propitiatory death, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death *of* his saints." The Holy Ghost, Ps 116:15, states the first; our translators, honest men, have very fairly and truly inferred the second. We are obliged to them. The

death of your lovely child, loveliest in the beauties of holiness, with all that was most afflictive and full of sore trial in it, is nevertheless, among the things in your little family, which are right precious in the sight of the Lord; and this in it, is that which pleases you most; precious, because of the infinite, the abiding, and the unchanging worth of the death of God's own holy child Jesus. The calm so wonderful, the consolation so felt, yea, the joy in tribulation so great, have set before your eyes a new testimony, heart touching indeed, that, after eighteen hundred years have passed, *"the death of his saints"* is still precious as ever in the sight of the Lord. Take your book of life, sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, and in your family record, put the death of Rosanna down among the precious things in your sight also—I should rather have said likewise. Present my kindest regards to Miss S—Tell her to wipe that tear away—Rosanna needs it not. I hope they are all well at L—, and that your young men take the way of the Lord in good part. My dear Brother, "Go thy way, thy child liveth," is still as fresh as ever it was, from the lips of Him that liveth for ever and ever, and rings with a loftier and sweeter sound, even than when it was first heard in the ears and heart of the parent who had brought and laid his sick and dying at the feet of Him who hath the keys of hell and of death. *John Jameson, in "Letters; True Fame," etc., 1838.*

Verse 16. *O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* Thou hast made me free, and I am impatient to be bound again. Thou hast broken the bonds of sin; now, Lord, bind me with the cords of love. Thou hast delivered me from the tyranny of Satan, make me as one of thy hired servants. I owe my liberty, my life, and all that I have, or hope, to thy generous rescue: and now, O my gracious, my Divine Friend and Redeemer, I lay myself and my all at thy feet. *Samuel Lavington, 1728-1807.*

Verse 16. *I am thy servant.* The saints have ever had a holy pride in being God's servants; there cannot be a greater honour than to serve such a Master as commands heaven, earth, and hell. Do not think thou dost honour God in serving him; but this is how God honours thee, in vouchsafing thee to be his servant. David could not study to give himself a greater style than—"*O Lord, or, truly I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid,*" and this he spake, not in the phrase of a human compliment, but in the humble confession of a believer. Yea, so doth the apostle commend this excellency, that he sets the title of servant before that of an apostle; first servant, then apostle. Great was his office in being an apostle, greater his blessing in being a servant of Jesus Christ; the one is an outward calling, the other an inward grace. There was an apostle condemned, never any servant of God. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 16. *I am thy servant.* This expression of the king of Israel implies

1. *A humble sense of his distance from God and his dependence upon him.* This is the first view which a penitent hath of himself when he returns to God. It is the first view which a good man hath of himself in his approaches to, or communion with God. And, indeed, it is what ought to be inseparable from the exercise of every other pious affection. To have, as it were, high and honourable thoughts of

the majesty and greatness of the living God, and a deep and awful impression of the immediate and continual presence of the heart searching God, this naturally produces the greatest self abasement, and the most unfeigned subjection of spirit before our Maker. It leads to a confession of him as Lord over all, and having the most absolute right, not only to the obedience, but to the disposal of all his creatures. I cannot help thinking this is conveyed to us in the language of the Psalmist, when he says, *O LORD, truly I am thy servant*. He was a prince among his subjects, and had many other honourable distinctions, both natural and acquired, among men; but he was sensible of his being a servant and subject of the King of kings; and the force of his expression, "*Truly, I am thy servant*," not only signifies the certainty of the thing, but how deeply and strongly he felt a conviction of its truth.

2. This declaration of the Psalmist implies a *confession of his being bound by particular covenant and consent unto God*, and a repetition of the same by a new adherence. This, as it was certainly true with regard to him, having often dedicated himself to God, so I take it to be confirmed by the reiteration of the expression here, *O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant*. As if he had said, "O Lord, it is undeniable; it is impossible to recede from it. I am thine by many ties. I am by nature thy subject and thy creature; and I have many times confessed thy right and promised my own duty." I need not mention to you, either the example in the Psalmist's writings, or the occasions in his history, on which he solemnly surrendered himself to God. It is sufficient to say, that it was very proper that he should frequently call this to mind, and confess it before God, for though it could not make his Creator's right any stronger, it would certainly make the guilt of his own violation of it so much the greater.

3. This declaration of the Psalmist is an *expression of his peculiar and special relation to God. I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid*. There is another passage of his writings where the same expression occurs: Ps 86:16. "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid." There is some variation among interpreters in the way of illustrating this phrase. Some take it for a figurative way of affirming, that he was bound in the strongest manner to God, as those children who were born of a maidservant, and born in his own house, were in the most absolute manner their master's property. Others take it to signify his being not only brought up in the visible church of God, but in a pious family, and educated in his fear; and others would have it to signify still more especially that the Psalmist's mother was an eminently pious woman. And indeed I do not think that was a circumstance, if true, either unworthy of him to remember, or of the Spirit of God to put upon record. *John Witherspoon, 1722-1797*.

Verse 16. O Lord, *I am thy servant*, by a double right; (and, oh, that I could do thee double service;) as thou art the Lord of my life, and I am the son of thy handmaid: not of Hagar, but of Sarah; not of the bondwoman, but of the free; and therefore I serve thee not in fear, but in love; or therefore in fear, because in love: and then is service best done when it is done in love. In love indeed I am

bound to serve thee, for, *Thou hast loosed my bonds*; the bonds of death which compassed me about, by delivering me from a dangerous sickness, and restoring me to health: or in a higher kind; thou hast loosed my bonds by freeing me from being a captive to be a servant; and which is more, from being a servant to be a son: and more than this, from being a son of thy handmaid, to be a son of thyself. *Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 16. Bless God for the privilege of being the children of godly parents. Better be the child of a godly than of a wealthy parent. I hope none of you are of so vile a spirit as to condemn your parents because of their piety. Certainly it is a great privilege when you can go to God, and plead your Father's covenant: *LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.* So did Solomon, 1Ki 8:25-26, "Lord, make good thy word to thy servant David, my father." That you are not born of infidels, nor of papists, nor of upholders of superstition and formality, but in a strict, serious, godly family, it is a great advantage that you have. It is better to be the sons of faithful ministers than of nobles. *Thomas Manton, in, a Sermon preached before the Sons of the Clergy.*

Verse 16. *Thou hast loosed my bonds.* Mercies are given to encourage us in God's service, and should be remembered to that end. Rain descends upon the earth, not that it might be more barren, but more fertile. We are but stewards; the mercies we enjoy are not our own, but to be improved for our Master's service. Great mercies should engage to great obedience. God begins the Decalogue with a memorial of his mercy in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt,—*"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt."* How affectionately doth the Psalmist own his relation to God as his servant, when he considers how God had loosed his bonds: *O LORD, truly I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds!* the remembrance of thy mercy shall make me know no relation but that of a servant to thee. When we remember what wages we have from God, we must withal remember that we owe more service, and more liveliness in service, to him. Duty is but the ingenuous consequent of mercy. It is irrational to encourage ourselves in our way to hell by a remembrance of heaven, to foster a liberty in sin by a consideration of God's bounty. When we remember that all we have or are is the gift of God's liberality, we should think ourselves obliged to honour him with all that we have, for he is to have honour from all his gifts. It is a sign we aimed at God's glory in begging mercy, when we also aim at God's glory in enjoying it. It is a sign that love breathed the remembrance of mercy into our hearts, when at the same time it breathes a resolution into us to improve it. It is not our tongues, but our lives must praise him. Mercies are not given to one member, but to the whole man. *Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 17. *The sacrifice of thanksgiving.*

"When all the heart is pure, each warm desire

Sublimed by holy love's ethereal fire.

On winged words our breathing thoughts may rise,

And soar to heaven, a grateful sacrifice." *James Scott.*

Verse 18. *Vows.* Are well composed vows such promoters of religion? and are they to be made so warily? and do they bind so strictly? Then be sure to wait until God give you just and fit seasons for vowing. Be not over hasty to vow: it is an inconsiderate and foolish haste of Christians to make more occasions of vowing than God doth make for them. Make your vows, and spare not, so often as God bids you; but do not do it oftener. You would wonder I should dissuade you from vowing often, when you have such constant mercies; and wonder well you might, if God did expect your extraordinary bond and security for every ordinary mercy: but he requires it not; he is content with ordinary security of gratitude for ordinary mercies; when he calls for extraordinary security and acknowledgment, by giving extraordinary mercies, then give it and do it. *Henry Hurst.*

Verse 18. *Now.* God gave an order that no part of the thank offering should be kept till the third day, to teach us to present our praises when benefits are newly received, which else would soon wax stale and putrefy as fish doth. "*I will pay my vows now,*" saith David. *Samuel Clarke (1599-1682) in "A Mirror or Looking glass, both for Saints and Sinners."*

Verse 18. *In the presence of all his people.* For good example's sake. This also was prince like, Eze 46:10. The king's seat in the sanctuary was open, that all might see him there, 2Ki 11:14, and 2Ki 23:3. *John Trapp.*

Verse 18. *In the presence of all his people.* Be bold, be bold, ye servants of the Lord, in sounding forth the praises of your God. Go into presses of people; and in the midst of them praise the Lord. Wicked men are over bold in pouring forth their blasphemies to the dishonour of God; they care not who hear them. They stick not to do it in the midst of cities. Shall they be more audacious to dishonour God, than ye zealous to honour him? Assuredly Christ will shew himself as forward to confess you, as you are, or can be to confess him. Mt 10:32. This holy boldness is the ready way to glory. *William Gouge.*

Verse 19 (*second clause*). He does not simply say in the midst of Jerusalem: but, *in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem?* He speaks to the city as one who loved it and delighted in it. We see here, how the saints were affected towards the city in which was the house of God. Thus we should be moved in spirit towards that church in which God dwells, the temple he inhabits, which is built up, not of stones, but of the souls of the faithful. *Wolfgang Musculus.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 1-2.

1. Present—"I love."
2. Past—"He hath."
3. Future—"I will."

Verses 1-2. Personal experience in reference to prayer.

1. We have prayed, often, constantly, in different ways, etc.
2. We have been heard. A grateful retrospect of usual answers and of special answers.
3. Love to God has thus been promoted.
4. Our sense of the value of prayer has become so intense that we cannot cease praying.

Verses 1, 2, 9. If you cast your eyes on the first verse of the Psalm, you find a *profession of love—I love the Lord*; if on the second, a *promise of prayer—I will call on the Lord*; if on the ninth, a *resolve of walking—I will walk before the LORD*. There are three things should be the object of a saint's care, the devotion of the soul, profession of the mouth, and conversation of the life: that is the sweetest melody in God's ears, when not only the voice sings, but the heartstrings keep tune, and the hand keepeth time. *Nathanael Hardy*.

Verse 2. "He hath, "and therefore "I will." Grace moving to action.

Verses 2, 4, 13, 17. Calling upon God mentioned four times very suggestively—I will do it (Ps 116:2), I have tried it (Ps 116:4), I will do it when I take (Ps 116:13), and when I offer (Ps 116:17).

Verses 2, 9, 13-14, 17. The "I wills" of the Psalm. I will call (Ps 116:2), I will walk (Ps 116:9), I will take (Ps 116:13), I will pay (Ps 116:14), I will offer (Ps 116:17).

Verses 3-4, 8. See Spurgeon's Sermon, "To Souls in Agony, " Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No 1216.

Verses 3-5. The story of a tried soul.

1. Where I was. Ps 116:3.
2. What I did. Ps 116:4.
3. What I learned. Ps 116:5.

Verses 3-6.

1. The *occasion*. (a) Bodily affliction. (b) Terrors of conscience. (c) Sorrow of heart. (d) Self accusation: "I found, "etc.
2. The *petition*. (a) Direct: "I called, "etc. (b) Immediate: "then, "when the trouble came; prayer was the first remedy sought, not the last, as with many. (c) Brief—limited to the due thing needed: "deliver my soul." (d) Importunate: "O Lord, I beseech thee."
3. The *restoration*. (a) Implied: "gracious, "etc., Ps 116:5. (b) Expressed, Ps 116:6, generally: "The Lord preserveth, "etc.; particularly; "I was brought low, " etc.: helped me to pray, helped me out of trouble in answer to prayer, and helped me to praise him for the mercy, the faithfulness, the grace, shown in my deliverance. God is glorified through the afflictions of his people: the submissive are preserved in them, and the lowly are exalted by them. *G. R.*

Verse 5.

1. Eternal grace, or the purpose of love.

2. Infinite justice, or the difficulty of holiness.
3. Boundless mercy, or the outcome of atonement.

Verse 6.

1. A singular class—"simple."
2. A singular fact—"the Lord preserveth the simple."
3. A singular proof of the fact—"I was, "etc.

Verse 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* Rest in God may be said to belong to the people of God on a fourfold account.

1. By designation. The rest which the people of God have in him is the result of his own purpose and design, taken up from his mere good pleasure and love.
2. By purchase. The rest which they wanted as *creatures* they had forfeited as *sinners*. This, therefore, Christ laid down his life to procure.
3. By promise. This is God's kind engagement. He has said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest, "Ex 33:14.
4. By their own choice gracious souls have a rest in God. *D. Wilcox.*

Verse 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* When, or upon what occasion a child of God should use the Psalmist's language.

1. After converse with the world in the business of his calling every day.
2. When going to the sanctuary on the Lord's day.
3. In and under any trouble he may meet with.
4. When departing from this world at death. *D. Wilcox.*

Verse 7.

1. The rest of the soul: "My rest, "this is in God. (a) The soul was created to find its rest in God. (b) On that account it cannot find rest elsewhere.
2. Its departure from that rest. This is implied in the word "Return."
3. Its return. (a) By repentance. (b) By faith, in the way provided for its return. (c) By prayer.
4. Its encouragement to return. (a) Not in itself, but in God. (b) Not in the justice, but in the goodness of God: "for the Lord, "etc. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." *G.R.*

Verse 8. The trinity of experimental godliness.

1. It is a unity—"Thou hast delivered"; all the mercies come from one source.
2. It is a trinity of deliverance, *of* soul, eyes, feet; *from* punishment, sorrow, and sinning; *to* life, joy, and stability.
3. It is a trinity in unity: all this was done for me and in me—"my soul, mine eyes, my feet."

Verse 9. The effect of deliverance upon ourselves: "I will walk, " etc.

1. Walk by faith in him.

2. Walk in love with him.
3. Walk by obedience to him. *G. R.*

Verses 10-11.

1. The rule: "I believed, "etc. In general the Psalmist spoke what he had well considered and tested by his own experience, as when he said, "I was brought low and he helped me." "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me."
2. The exception; "I was greatly afflicted, I said, "etc. (a) He spoke wrongfully: he said "All men are liars, " which had some truth in it, but was not the whole truth. (b) Hastily: "I said in my haste, "without due reflection. (c) Angrily, under the influence of affliction, probably from the unfaithfulness of others. Nature acts before grace—the one by instinct, the other from consideration. *G. R.*

Verse 11. A hasty speech.

1. There was much truth in it.
2. It erred on the right side, for it showed faith in God rather than in the creature.
3. It did err in being too sweeping, too severe, too suspicious.
4. It was soon cured. The remedy for all such hasty speeches is—Get to work in the spirit of Ps 116:12.

Verse 12. Overwhelming obligations.

1. A sum in arithmetic—"all his benefits."
2. A calculation of indebtedness—"What shall I render?"
3. A problem for personal solution—"What shall I?" See Spurgeon's Sermon, No. 910.

Verses 12, 14. Whether well composed religious vows do not exceedingly promote religion. Sermon by Henry Hurst, A.M., in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 13. Sermon on the Lord's supper. We take the cup of the Lord

1. In memory of him who is our salvation.
2. In token of our trust in him.
3. In evidence of our obedience to him.
4. In type of communion with him.
5. In hope of drinking it new with him ere long.

Verse 13. The various cups mentioned in Scripture would make an interesting subject.

Verse 14. *Vow.* Or the excellence of time present.

Verse 15.

1. *The declaration.* Not the death of the wicked, nor even the death of the righteous is in itself precious; but, (a) Because their persons are precious to him. (b) Because their experience in death is precious to him. (c) Because of their conformity in death to their Covenant Head; and (d) Because it puts an end to their sorrows, and translates them to their rest.

2. *Its manifestation.* (a) In preserving them from death. (b) In supporting them in death. (c) In giving them victory over death. (d) In glorifying them after death.

Verse 15. See Spurgeon's Sermons "Precious Deaths," No. 1036.

Verse 16. *Holy Service.*

1. Emphatically avowed.
2. Honestly rendered—"truly."
3. Logically defended—"son of thine handmaid."
4. Consistent with conscious liberty.

Verse 17. This is due to our God, good for ourselves, and encouraging to others.

Verse 17. *The sacrifice of thanksgiving.*

1. How it may be rendered. In secret love, in conversation, in sacred song, in public testimony, in special gifts and works.
2. Why we should render it. For answered prayers (Ps 116:1-2), memorable deliverances (Ps 116:3), choice preservation (Ps 116:6); remarkable restoration (Ps 116:7-8), and for the fact of our being his servants (Ps 116:16).
3. When should we render it. *Now*, while the mercy is on the memory, and as often as fresh mercies come to us.

Verse 18.

1. How vows may be paid in public. By going to public worship as the first thing we do when health is restored. By uniting heartily in the song. By coming to the communion. By special thank offering. By using fit opportunities for open testimony to the Lord's goodness.
2. The special difficulty in the matter. To pay them *to the Lord*, and not in ostentation or as an empty form.
3. The peculiar usefulness of the public act. It interests others, touches their hearts, reproveth, encourages, etc.

Verse 19. The Christian at home.

1. In God's house.
2. Among the saints.
3. At his favourite work, "Praise."

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH PSALM

David's Harpe full of most delectable harmony newly stringed and set in tune by Thomas Becon. This is an exposition of Ps 116:10-19, or Psalm 115 according to the Latin Version. It was originally published in 12mo, in 1542, and reprinted in *"The Early Works of Thomas Becon.* S. T. P. Chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, Prebendary of Canterbury, &c., "by "The Parker Society." 1843.

AN EXPOSITION upon some select Psalms of David, containing great store of most excellent and comfortable doctrine, and instruction for all those, that (under the burden of sin) thirst for comfort in Christ Jesus. Written by that faithful servant of God, M. ROBERT ROLLOK, sometime Pastor in the Church of Edinburgh: And translated out of Latin into English, by C. L. CHARLES LUMISDEN Minister of the Gospel of Christ at Dudingstoun. 12mo. EDINBURGH. 1600. Contains an Exposition of this Psalm.

The Saints' Sacrifice: or, A Commentary on Psalm 116. Which is a gratulatory Psalm, for Deliverance from Deadly Distress. By William Gouge, D.D. London. 1631. Reprinted, with S. Smith, on. Psalm 1, and T. Pierson, on Psalms 27, 84, 87, in Nichol's Series of Commentaries. 1868.

Sermons Experimental: on Psalms 116 and 117. VERY USEFUL for A Wounded Spirit. By William Slater, D.D., sometimes Rector of Linsham, and Vicar of Pitminster, in SOMMERSETSHIRE. Published by his Son WILLIAM SLATER, Mr. of Arts... London: 1638 4to.

Meditations and Disquisitions upon Seven Consolatory Psalms of David: namely, The 23. The 27, The 30, The 34, The 84, The 103, The 116.—By *Sir Richard Baker, Knight*. London. 1640. 4to.

Divine Drops Distilled from the Fountain of Holy Scriptures: Delivered in several Exercises before Sermons, upon Twenty-three Texts of Scripture. By that worthy Gospel Preacher Gualter Cradock, Late Preacher at All Hallows Great in London. 1650. In this old quarto there is an Exposition of Psalm 116; but it is almost wholly political, and worthless for our purpose; we mention it only as a caution, and to prevent disappointment.

In "*The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms*. —By the Rev. Dr. EDERSHEIM, Torquay, 1873, "there is a brief exposition of Ps 116:1-12.

Psalm 117

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

SUBJECT. This Psalm, which is very little in its letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for, bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord. In all probability it was frequently used as a brief hymn suitable for almost every occasion, and especially when the time for worship was short. Perhaps it was also sung at the commencement or at the close of other Psalms, just as we now use the doxology. It would have served either to open a service or to conclude it. It is both short and sweet. The same divine Spirit which expatiates in the 119th, here condenses his utterances into two short verses, but yet the same infinite fullness is present and perceptible. It may be worth noting that this is at once the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the

central portion of the whole Bible.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *O praise the LORD, all ye nations.* This is an exhortation to the Gentiles to glorify Jehovah, and a clear proof that the Old Testament spirit differed widely from that narrow and contracted national bigotry with which the Jews of our Lord's day became so inveterately diseased. The nations could not be expected to join in the praise of Jehovah unless they were also to be partakers of the benefits which Israel enjoyed; and hence the Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man, even as Moses had prophesied when he said, "Rejoice. O ye nations, his people" (De 32:43), for so the Hebrew has it. The nations were to be his people. He would call them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved. We know and believe that no one tribe of men shall be unrepresented in the universal song which shall ascend unto the Lord of all. Individuals have already been gathered out of every kindred and people and tongue by the preaching of the gospel, and these have right heartily joined in magnifying the grace which sought them out, and brought them to know the Saviour. These are but the advance guard of a number which no man can number who will come ere long to worship the all glorious One. Praise him, all ye people. Having done it once, do it again, and do it still more fervently, daily increasing in the reverence and zeal with which you extol the Most High. Not only praise him nationally by your rulers, but popularly in your masses. The multitude of the common folk shall bless the Lord. Inasmuch as the matter is spoken of twice, its certainty is confirmed, and the Gentiles must and shall extol Jehovah—all of them, without exception. Under the gospel dispensation we worship no new god, but the God of Abraham is our God for ever and ever; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Verse 2. *For his merciful kindness is great toward us.* By which is meant not only his great love toward the Jewish people, but towards the whole family of man. The Lord is kind to us as his creatures, and merciful to us as sinners, hence his merciful kindness to us as sinful creatures. This mercy has been very great, or powerful. The mighty grace of God has prevailed even as the waters of the flood prevailed over the earth: breaking over all bounds, it has flowed towards all portions of the multiplied race of man. In Christ Jesus, God has shown mercy mixed with kindness, and that to the very highest degree. We can all join in this grateful acknowledgment, and in the praise which is therefore due. And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. He has kept his covenant promise that in the seed of Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed, and he will eternally keep every single promise of that covenant to all those who put their trust in him. This should be a cause of constant and grateful praise, wherefore the Psalm concludes as it began, with another Hallelujah, Praise ye the LORD.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. A very short Psalm if you regard the words, but of very great compass and most excellent if you thoughtfully consider the meaning. There are here five principal points of doctrine.

First, *the calling of the Gentiles*, the Apostle being the interpreter, Ro 15:11; but in vain might the Prophet invite the Gentiles to praise Jehovah, unless they were to be gathered into the unity of the faith together with the children of Abraham.

Second, *The Summary of the Gospel*, namely, the manifestation of grace and truth, the Holy Spirit being the interpreter, Joh 1:17.

Third, *The end of so great a blessing*, namely, the worship of God in spirit and in truth, as we know that the kingdom of the Messiah is spiritual.

Fourth, *the employment of the subjects of the great King* is to praise and glorify Jehovah.

Lastly, *the privilege of these servants*: that, as to the Jews, so also to the Gentiles, who know and serve God the Saviour, eternal life and blessedness are brought, assured in this life, and prepared in heaven. *Mollerus*.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm, the shortest portion of the Book of God, is quoted and given much value to, in Ro 15:11. And upon this it has been profitably observed, "It is a small portion of Scripture, and such as we might easily overlook it. But not so the Holy Ghost. He gleans up this precious little testimony which speaks of grace to the Gentiles, and presses it on our attention." *From Bellett's Short Meditations on the Psalms, chiefly in their Prophetic character, 1871.*

Whole Psalm. The occasion and the author of this Psalm are alike unknown. De Wette regards it as a *Temple Psalm*, and agrees with Rosenmueller in the supposition that it was sung either at the beginning or the end of the service in the temple. Knapp supposes that it was used as an intermediate service, sung during the progress of the general service, to vary the devotion, and to awaken a new interest in the service, either sung by the choir or by the whole people. *Albert Barnes*.

Whole Psalm. In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short Psalm giveth us to understand. *David Dickson*.

Whole Psalm. This is the shortest, and the next but one is the longest, of the Psalms. There are times for short hymns and long hymns, for short prayers and long prayers, for short sermons and long sermons, for short speeches and long speeches. It is better to be too short than too long, as it can more easily be mended. Short addresses need no formal divisions: long addresses require them, as in the next Psalm but one. *G. Rogers*.

Verse 1. *O praise the Lord*, etc. The praise of God is here made both the beginning and the end of the Psalm; to show, that in praising God the saints are never satisfied with their own efforts, and would infinitely magnify him, even as his perfections are infinite. Here they make a circle, the

beginning, middle, and end whereof is *hallelujah*. In the last Psalm, when David had said, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," and so in all likelihood had made an end, yet he repeats the *hallelujah* again, and cries, "Praise ye the Lord." The Psalmist had made an end and yet he had not done; to signify, that when we have said our utmost for God's praise, we must not be content, but begin anew. There is hardly any duty more pressed in the Old Testament upon us, though less practised, than this of praising God. To quicken us therefore to a duty so necessary, but so much neglected, this and many other Psalms were penned by David, purposely to excite us, that are the *nations* here meant, to consecrate our whole lives to the singing and setting forth of God's worthy praises. *Abraham Wright*.

Verse 1. *All ye nations*. Note: each nation of the world has some special gift bestowed on it by God, which is not given to the others, whether you have regard to nature or grace, for which it ought to praise God. *Le Blanc*.

Verse 1. *Praise him*. A different word is here used for "*praise*" than in the former clause: a word which is more frequently used in the Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic languages; and signifies the celebration of the praises of God with a high voice. *John Gill*.

Verse 2. *For his merciful kindness is great toward us*. We cannot part from this Psalm without remarking that even in the Old Testament we have more than one instance of a recognition on the part of those that were without the pale of the church that God's favour to Israel was a source of blessing to themselves. Such were probably to some extent the sentiments of Hiram and the Queen of Sheba, the contemporaries of Solomon; such the experience of Naaman; such the virtual acknowledgments of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede. They beheld "his merciful kindness" towards his servants of the house of Israel, and they praised him accordingly. *John Francis Thrupp*.

Verse 2. *For his merciful kindness is great toward us*. Albeit there be matter of praise unto God in himself, though we should not be partakers of any benefit from him, yet the Lord doth give his people cause to praise him for favours to them in their own particular cases. *David Dickson*.

Verse 2. *For his merciful kindness is great*. *rbg, gabar, is strong*: it is not only great in *bulk* or *number*, but it is *powerful*; it prevails over sin, Satan, death, and hell. *Adam Clarke*

Verse 2. *Merciful kindness... and the truth of the LORD*. Here, and so in divers other Psalms, God's mercy and truth are joined together; to show that all passages and proceedings, both in ordinances and in providence, whereby he comes and communicates himself to his people are not only mercy, though that is very sweet, but truth also. Their blessings come to them in the way of promise from God, as bound to them by the truth of his covenant. This is soul satisfying indeed; this turns all that a man hath to cream, when every mercy is a present sent from heaven by virtue of a promise. Upon this account, God's mercy is ordinarily in the Psalms bounded by his truth; that none may either

presume him more merciful than he hath declared himself in his word; nor despair of finding mercy *gratis*, according to the truth of his promise. Therefore though thy sins be great, believe the text, and know that God's mercy is greater than the sins. The high heaven covereth as well tall mountains as small mole hills, and mercy can cover all. The more desperate thy disease, the greater is the glory of thy physician, who hath perfectly cured thee. *Abraham Wright*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. The universal kingdom.

1. The same God.
2. The same worship.
3. The same reason for it.

Verse 2. Merciful kindness. In God's kindness there is mercy, because,

1. Our sin deserves the reverse of kindness.
2. Our weakness requires great tenderness.
3. Our fears can only be so removed.

Verse 2 (last clause)

1. In his attribute—he is always faithful.
2. In his revelation—always infallible.
3. In his action—always according to promise.

Psalm 118

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

AUTHOR AND SUBJECT. In the book *Ezr* 3:10-11, we read that "when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise he Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." Now the words mentioned in *Ezra* are the first and last sentences of this Psalm, and we therefore conclude that the people chanted the whole of this sublime song; and, moreover, that the use of this composition on such occasions was ordained by David, whom we conceive to be its author. The next step leads us to

believe that he is its subject, at least in some degree; for it is clear that the writer is speaking concerning himself in the first place, though he may not have strictly confined himself to all the details of his our personal experience. That the Psalmist had a prophetic view of our Lord Jesus is very manifest; the frequent quotations from this song in the New Testament prove this beyond all questions; but at the same time it could not have been intended that every particular line and sentence should be read in reference to the Messiah, for this requires very great ingenuity, and ingenious interpretations are seldom true. Certain devout expositors have managed to twist the expression of Ps 118:17, "I shall not die, but live, "so as to make it applicable to our Lord, who did actually die, and whose glory it is that he died; but we cannot bring our minds to do such violence to the words of holy writ.

The Psalm, seems to us to describe either David or some other man of God who was appointed by the divine choice to a high and honourable office in Israel. This elect champion found himself rejected by his friends and fellow countrymen, and at the same time violently opposed by his enemies. In faith in God he battles for his appointed place, and in due time he obtains it in such a way as greatly to display the power and goodness of the Lord. He then goes up to the house of the Lord to offer sacrifice, and to express his gratitude for the divine interposition, all the people blessing him, and wishing him abundant prosperity. This heroic personage, whom we cannot help thinking to be David himself, broadly typified our Lord, but not in such a manner that in all the minutiae of his struggles and prayers we are to hunt for parallels. The suggestion of Alexander that the speaker is a typical individual representing the nation, is exceedingly well worthy of attention, but it is not inconsistent with the idea that a personal leader may be intended, since that which describes the leader will be in a great measure true of his followers. The experience of the Head is that of the members, and both may be spoken of in much the same terms. Alexander thinks that the deliverance celebrated cannot be identified with any one so exactly as with that from the Babylonian exile; but we judge it best to refer it to no one incident in particular, but to regard it as a national song, adapted alike for the rise of a chosen here, and the building of a temple. Whether a nation is founded again by a conquering prince, or a temple founded by the laying of its cornerstone in joyful state, the Psalm is equally applicable.

DIVISION. We propose to divide this Psalm thus, from Ps 118:1-4 the faithful are called upon to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Lord; from Ps 118:5-18 the Psalmist gives forth a narrative of his experience, and an expression of his faith; in Ps 118:19-21 he asks admittance into the house of the Lord, and begins the acknowledgment of the divine salvation. In Ps 118:22-27 the priests and people recognize their ruler, magnify the Lord for him, declare him blessed, and bid him approach the altar with his sacrifice. In Ps 118:28-29 the grateful hero himself exalts God the ever merciful.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD.* The grateful hero feels that he cannot himself alone sufficiently express his thankfulness, and therefore he calls in the aid of others. Grateful hearts are greedy of men's tongues, and would monopolize them all for God's glory. The whole nation was concerned in David's triumphant accession, and therefore it was right that they should unite in his adoring song of praise. The thanks were to be rendered unto Jehovah alone, and not to the piety or valour of the hero himself. It is always well to trace our mercies to him who bestows them, and if we cannot give him anything else, let us at any rate give him our thanks. We must not stop short at the second agent, but rise at once to the first cause, and render all our praises *unto the Lord* himself. Have we been of a forgetful or murmuring spirit? Let us hear the lively language of the text, and allow it to speak to our hearts: "Cease your complaining, cease from all self glorification, and give thanks unto the Lord."

For he is good. This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he *does* them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he *is good*. In the truest sense he alone is good, "There is none good but one, that is God"; therefore in all gratitude the Lord should have the royal portion. If others seem to be good, he *is* good. If others are good in a measure, he is good beyond measure. When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord because he is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless him that "he is good." We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questionable, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; his dispensations may vary, but his nature is always the same, and always good. It is not only that he was good, and will be good, but he *is* good; let his providence be what it may. Therefore let us even at this present moment, though the skies be dark with clouds, yet give thanks unto his name.

Because his mercy endureth for ever. Mercy is a great part of his goodness, and one which more concerns us than any other, for we are sinners and have need of his mercy. Angels may say that he is good, but they need not his mercy and cannot therefore take an equal delight in it; inanimate creation declares that *he is good*, but it cannot feel his *mercy*, for it has never transgressed; but man, deeply guilty and graciously forgiven, beholds mercy as the very focus and centre of the goodness of the Lord. The endurance of the divine mercy is a special subject for song: notwithstanding our sins, our trials, our fears, his mercy *endureth for ever*. The best of earthly joys pass away, and even the world itself grows old and hastens to decay, but there is no change in the mercy of God; he was faithful to our forefathers, he is merciful to us, and will be gracious to our children and our children's children. It is to be hoped that the philosophical interpreters who endeavour to clip the word "for

ever", into a mere period of time will have the goodness to let this passage alone. However, whether they do or not, we shall believe in endless mercy—mercy to eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the grand incarnation of the mercy of God, calls upon us at every remembrance of him to give thanks unto the Lord, for "he is good."

Verse 2. *Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.* God had made a covenant with their forefathers, a covenant of mercy and love, and to that covenant he was faithful evermore. Israel sinned in Egypt, provoked the Lord in the wilderness, went astray again and again under the judges, and transgressed at all times; and yet the Lord continued to regard them as his people, to favour them with his oracles, and to forgive their sins. He speedily ceased from the chastisements which they so richly deserved, because he had a favour towards them. He put his rod away the moment they repented, because his heart was full of compassion. "His mercy endureth for ever" was Israel's national hymn, which, as a people, they had been called upon to sing upon many former occasions; and now their leader, who had at last gained the place for which Jehovah had destined him, calls upon the whole nation to join with him in extolling, in this particular instance of the divine goodness, the eternal mercy of the Lord. David's success was mercy to Israel, as well as mercy to himself. If Israel does not sing, who will? If Israel does not sing of mercy, who can? If Israel does not sing when the Son of David ascends the throne, the very stones will cry out.

Verse 3. *Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.* The sons of Aaron were specially set apart to come nearest to God, and it was only because of his mercy that they were enabled to live in the presence of the thrice holy Jehovah, who is a consuming fire. Every time the morning and evening lamb was sacrificed, the priests saw the continual mercy of the Lord, and in all the holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its services from hour to hour, they had renewed witness of the goodness of the Most High. When the high priest went in unto the holy place and came forth accepted, he might, above all men, sing of the eternal mercy. If this Psalm refers to David, the priests had special reason for thankfulness on his coming to the throne, for Saul had made a great slaughter among them, and had at various times interfered with their sacred office. A man had now come to the throne who for their Master's sake would esteem them, give them their dues, and preserve them safe from all harm. Our Lord Jesus, having made all his people priests unto God, may well call upon them in that capacity to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Most High. Can any one of the royal priesthood be silent?

Verse 4. *Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever.* If there were any throughout the world who did not belong to Israel after the flesh, but nevertheless had a holy fear and lowly reverence of God, the Psalmist calls upon them to unite with him in his thanksgiving, and to do it especially on the occasion of his exaltation to the throne; and this is no more than they would cheerfully agree to do, since every good man in the world is benefited when a true servant of God is

placed in a position of honour and influence. The prosperity of Israel through the reign of David was a blessing to all who feared Jehovah. A truly God fearing man will have his eye much upon God's mercy, because he is deeply conscious of his need of it, and because that attribute excites in him a deep feeling of reverential awe. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." In the three exhortations, to Israel, to the house of Aaron, and to them that fear the Lord, there is a repetition of the exhortation to say, "that his mercy endureth for ever." We are not only to believe, but to declare the goodness of God; truth is not to be hushed up, but proclaimed. God would have his people act as witnesses, and not stand silent in the day when his honour is impugned. Specially is it our joy to speak out to the honour and glory of God when we think up, in the exaltation of his dear Son. We should shout "Hosannah, "and sing loud "Hallelujahs" when we behold the stone which the builders rejected lifted into its proper place.

In each of the three exhortations notice carefully the word "*now*." There is no time like time present for telling out the praises of God. The present exaltation of the Son of David now demands from all who are the subjects of his kingdom continual songs of thanksgiving to him who hath set him on high in the midst of Zion. *Now* with us should mean always. When would it be right to cease from praising God, whose mercy never ceases? The fourfold testimonies to the everlasting mercy of God which are now before us speak like four evangelists, each one declaring the very pith and marrow of the gospel; and they stand like four angels at the four corners of the earth holding the winds in their hands, restraining the plagues of the latter days that the mercy and long suffering of God may endure towards the sons of men. Here are four cords to bind the sacrifice to the four horns of the altar, and four trumpets with which to proclaim the year of jubilee to every quarter of the world. Let not the reader pass on to the consideration of the rest of the Psalm until he has with all his might lifted up both heart and voice to praise the Lord, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

"Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure."

Verse 5. *I called upon the LORD in distress*, or, "out of anguish I invoked Jah." Nothing was left him but prayer, his agony was too great for aught beside; but having the heart and the privilege to pray he possessed all things. Prayers which come out of distress generally come out of the heart, and therefore they go to the heart of God. It is sweet to recollect our prayers, and often profitable to tell others of them after they are heard. Prayer may be bitter in the offering, but it will be sweet in the answering. The man of God had called upon the Lord when he was not in distress, and therefore he found it natural and easy to call upon him when he was in distress. He worshipped he praised, he prayed: for all this is included in calling upon God, even when he was in a straitened condition. Some

read the original "a narrow gorge"; and therefore it was the more joy to him when he could say "The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." He passed out of the defile of distress into the well watered plain of delight. He says, "Jah heard me in a wide place, "for God is never shut up, or straitened. In God's case hearing means answering, hence the translators rightly put, "The Lord answered me, "though the original word is "*heard*." The answer was appropriate to the prayer, for he brought him out of his narrow and confined condition into a place of liberty where he could walk at large, free from obstruction and oppression. Many of us can join with the Psalmist in the declarations of this verse; deep was our distress on account of sin, and we were shut up as in a prison under the law, but in answer to the prayer of faith we obtained the liberty of full justification wherewith Christ makes men free, and we are free indeed. It was the Lord who did it, and unto his name we ascribe all the glory; we had no merits, no strength, no wisdom, all we could do was to call upon him, and even that was his gift; but the mercy which is to eternity came to our rescue, we were brought out of bondage, and we were made to delight ourselves in the length and breadth of a boundless inheritance. What a large place is that in which the great God has placed us! All things are ours, all times are ours, all places are ours, for God himself is ours; we have earth to lodge in and heaven to dwell in,—what larger place can be imagined? We need all Israel, the whole house of Aaron, and all them that fear the Lord, to assist us in the expression of our gratitude; and when they have aided us to the utmost, and we ourselves have done our best, all will fall short of the praises that are due to our gracious Lord.

Verse 6. *The LORD is on my side*, or, he is "for me." Once his justice was against me, but now he is my reconciled God, and engaged on my behalf. The Psalmist naturally rejoiced in the divine help; all men turned against him, but God was his defender and advocate, accomplishing the divine purposes of his grace. The expression may also be translated "to me, "that is to say, Jehovah belongs to me, and is mine. What infinite wealth is here! If we do not magnify the Lord we are of all men most brutish. I will not fear. He does not say that he should not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favour of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid. He was calm and confident, though surrounded with enemies, and so let all believers be, for thus they honour God. What can man do unto me? He can do nothing more than God permits; at the very uttermost he can only kill the body, but he hath no more that he can do. God having purposed to set his servant upon the throne, the whole race of mankind could do nothing to thwart the divine decree: the settled purpose of Jehovah's heart could not be turned aside, nor its accomplishment delayed, much less prevented, by the most rancorous hostility of the most powerful of men. Saul sought to slay David, but David outlived Saul, and sat upon his throne. Scribe and Pharisee, priest and Herodian, united in opposing the Christ of God, but he is exalted on high none the less because of their enmity. The mightiest man is a puny thing when he stands in opposition to

God, yea, he shrinks into utter nothingness. It were a pity to be afraid of such a pitiful, miserable, despicable object as a man opposed to the almighty God. The Psalmist here speaks like a champion throwing down the gauntlet to all comers, defying the universe in arms; a true Bayard, without fear and without reproach, he enjoys God's favour, and he defies every foe.

Verse 7. *The LORD taketh my part with them that help me.* Jehovah condescended to be in alliance with the good man and his comrades; his God was not content to look on, but he took part in the struggle. What a consolatory fact it is that the Lord takes our part, and that when he raises up friends for us he does not leave them to fight for us alone, but he himself as our chief defender deigns to come into the battle and wage war on our behalf. David mentioned those that helped him, he was not unmindful of his followers; there is a long record of David's mighty men in the book of Chronicles, and this teaches us that we are not to disdain or think little of the generous friends who rally around us; but still our great dependence and our grand confidence must be fixed upon the Lord alone. Without him the strong helpers fail; indeed, apart from him in the sons of men there is no help; but when our gracious Jehovah is pleased to support and strengthen those who aid us, they become substantial helpers to us. Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. The words, "my desire," are added by the translators; the Psalmist said, "I shall look upon my haters: I shall look upon them in the face, I shall make them cease from their contempt, I shall myself look down upon them instead of their looking down upon me. I shall see their defeat, I shall see the end of them." Our Lord Jesus does at this moment look down upon his adversaries, his enemies are his footstool; he shall look upon them at his second coming, and at the glance of his eyes they shall flee before him, not being able to endure that look with which he shall read them through and through.

Verse 8. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.* It is better in all ways, for first of all it is wiser: God is infinitely more able to help, and more likely to help, than man, and therefore prudence suggests that we put our confidence in him above all others. It is also morally better to do so, for it is the duty of the creature to trust in the Creator. God has a claim upon his creatures' faith, he deserves to be trusted; and to place our reliance upon another rather than upon himself, is a direct insult to his faithfulness. It is better in the sense of safer, since we can never be sure of our ground if we rely upon mortal man, but we are always secure in the hands of our God. It is better in its effect upon ourselves: to trust in man tends to make us mean, crouching, dependent; but confidence in God elevates, produces a sacred quiet of spirit, and sanctifies the soul. It is, moreover, much better to trust in God, as far as the result is concerned; for in many cases the human object of our trust fails from want of ability, from want of generosity, from want of affection, or from want of memory; but the Lord, so far from falling, does for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. This verse is written out of the experience of many who have first of all found the broken reeds of the creature break under them, and have afterwards joyfully found the Lord to be a solid pillar sustaining

all their weight.

Verse 9. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* These should be the noblest of men, chivalrous in character, and true to the core. The royal word should be unquestionable. They are noblest in rank and mightiest in power, and yet as a rule princes are not one whit more reliable than the rest of mankind. A gilded vane turns with the wind as readily as a meaner weathercock. Princes are but men, and the best of men are poor creatures. In many troubles they cannot help us in the least degree: for instance, in sickness, bereavement, or death; neither can they assist us one jot in reference to our eternal state. In eternity a prince's smile goes for nothing; heaven and hell pay no homage to royal authority. The favour of princes is proverbially fickle, the testimonies of worldlings to this effect are abundant. All of us remember the words put by the world's great poet into the lips of the dying Wolsey; their power lies in their truth:

"O how wretched

Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!

There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,

That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,

More pangs and fears than wars or women have;

And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,

Never to hope again."

Yet a prince's smile has a strange witchery to many hearts, few are proof against that tuft hunting which is the index of a weak mind. Principle has been forgotten and character has been sacrificed to maintain position at court; yea, the manliness which the meanest slave retains has been basely bartered for the stars and garters of a profligate monarch. He who puts his confidence in God, the great King, is thereby made mentally and spiritually stronger, and rises to the highest dignity of manhood; in fact, the more he trusts the more is he free, but the fawning sycophant of greatness is meaner than the dirt he treads upon. For this reason and a thousand others it is infinitely better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

Verse 10. *All nations compassed me about.* The hero of the Psalm, while he had no earthly friend upon whom he could thoroughly rely, was surrounded by innumerable enemies, who heartily hated him. He was hemmed in by his adversaries, and scarce could find a loophole of escape from the bands which made a ring around him. As if by common consent all sorts of people set themselves against him, and yet he was more than a match for them all, because he was trusting in the name of the Lord. Therefore does he joyfully accept the battle, and grasp the victory, crying, but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them, or "cut them in pieces." They thought to destroy *him*, but he was sure of destroying *them*; they meant to blot out his name, but he expected to render not only his own name but the name of the Lord his God more illustrious in the hearts of men. It takes grand faith to be calm

in the day of actual battle, and especially when that battle waxes hot; but our hero was as calm as if no fight was raging. Napoleon said that God was always on the side of the biggest battalions, but the Psalmist warrior found that the Lord of hosts was with the solitary champion, and that in his name the battalions were cut to pieces. There is a grand touch of the *ego* in the last sentence, but it is so overshadowed with the name of the Lord that there is none too much of it. He recognized his own individuality, and asserted it: he did not sit still supinely and leave the work to be done by God by some mysterious means; but he resolved with his own trusty sword to set about the enterprise, and so become in God's hand the instrument of his own deliverance. He did all in the name of the Lord, but he did not ignore his own responsibility, nor screen himself from personal conflict, for he cried, "I will destroy them." Observe that he does not speak of merely escaping from them like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but he vows that he will carry the war into his enemies' ranks, and overthrow them so thoroughly that there should be no fear of their rising up a second time.

Verse 11. *They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about.* He had such a vivid recollection of his danger that his enemies seem to live again in his verses. We see their fierce array, and their cruel combination of forces. They made a double ring, they surrounded him in a circle of many ranks, they not only talked of doing so, but they actually shut him up and enclosed him as within a wall. His heart had vividly realized his position of peril at the time, and now he delights to call it again to mind in order that he may the more ardently adore the mercy which made him strong in the hour of conflict, so that he broke through a troop, yea, swept a host to destruction. But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. I will subdue them, get them under my feet, and break their power in pieces. He is as certain about the destruction of his enemies as he was assured of their having compassed him about. They made the circle three and four times deep, but for all that he felt confident of victory. It is grand to hear a man speak in this fashion when it is not boasting, but the calm declaration of his heartfelt trust in God.

Verse 12. *They compassed me about like bees.* They seemed to be everywhere, like a swarm of bees, attacking him at every point; nimbly flying from place to place, stinging him meanwhile, and inflicting grievous pain. They threatened at first to baffle him: what weapon could he use against them? They were so numerous, so inveterate; so contemptible, yet so audacious; so insignificant and yet so capable of inflicting agony, that to the eye of reason there appeared no possibility of doing anything with them. Like the swarm of flies Egypt, there was no standing against them; they threatened to sting a man to death with their incessant malice, their base insinuations, their dastardly falsehoods. He was in an evil case, but even there faith availed. All powerful faith adapts itself to all circumstances, it can cast out devils, and it can drive out bees. Surely, if it outlives the sting of death, it will not die from the sting of a bee. They are quenched as the fire of thorns. Their fierce attacks soon came to an end, the bees lost their stings and the buzz of the swarm subsided; like thorns which

blaze with fierce crackling and abundant flame, but die out in a handful of ashes very speedily, so did the nations which surrounded our hero soon cease their clamour and come to an inglorious end. They were soon hot and soon cold, their attack was as short as it was sharp. He had no need to crush the bees, for like crackling thorns they died out of themselves. For a third time he adds, for in the name of the Lord will I destroy them, or "cut them down, "as men cut down thorns with a scythe or reaping hook. What wonders have been wrought in the name of the Lord! It is the battle cry of faith, before which its adversaries fly apace. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" brings instant terror into the midst of the foe. The name of the Lord is the one weapon which never fails in the day of battle: he who knows how to use it may chase a thousand with his single arm. Alas! we too often go to work and to conflict in our own name, and the enemy knows it not, but scornfully asks, "Who are ye?" Let us take care never to venture into the presence of the foe without first of all arming ourselves with this impenetrable mail. If we knew this name better, and trusted it more, our life would be more fruitful and sublime.

"Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky,
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly."

Verse 13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me,* "Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me." It is a vigorous apostrophe, in which the enemy is described as concentrating all his thrusting power into the thrusts which he gave to the man of God. He thrust again and again with the keenest point, even as bees thrust their stings into their victim. The foe had exhibited intense exasperation, and fearful determination, nor had he been without a measure of success; wounds had been given and received, and these smarted much, and were exceeding sore. Now, this is true of many a tried child of God who has been wounded by Satan, by the world, by temptation, by affliction; the sword has entered into his bones, and left its mark. That I might fall. This was the object of the thrusting: to throw him down, to wound him in such a way that he would no longer be able to keep his place, to make him depart from his integrity, and lose his confidence in God. If our adversaries can do this they will have succeeded to their heart's content: if we fall into grievous sin they will be better pleased than even if they had sent the bullet of the assassin into our heart, for a moral death is worse than a physical one. If they can dishonour us, and God in us, their victory will be complete. "Better death than false of faith" is the motto of one of our noble houses, and it may well be ours. It is to compass our fall that they compass us; they fill us with their venom that they may fill us with their sin. But the Lord helped me; a blessed "but." This is the saving clause. Other helpers were unable to chase away the angry nations, much less to destroy all the noxious swarms; but when the Lord came to the rescue the hero's single arm was strong enough to vanquish all his adversaries. How sweetly can many of us

repeat in the retrospect of our past tribulations this delightful sentence, "But the Lord helped *me*." I was assailed by innumerable doubts and fears, but the Lord helped me; my natural unbelief was terribly inflamed by the insinuations of Satan, but the Lord helped me; multiplied trials were rendered more intense by the cruel assaults of men, and I knew not what to do, but the Lord helped me. Doubtless, when we land on the hither shore of Jordan, this will be one of our songs, "Flesh and heart were failing me, and the adversaries of my soul surrounded me in the swellings of Jordan, but the Lord helped me. Glory be unto his name."

Verse 14. *The LORD my strength and song*, my strength while I was in the conflict, my song now that it is ended; my strength against the strong, and my song over their defeat. He is far from boasting of his own valour; he ascribes his victory to its real source, he has no song concerning his own exploits, but all his peans are unto *Jehovah Victor*, the Lord whose right hand and holy arm had given him the victory. And is become my salvation. The poet warrior knew that he was saved, and he not only ascribed that salvation unto God, but he declared God himself to be his salvation. It is an all-comprehending expression, signifying that from beginning to end, in the whole and in the details of it, he owed his deliverance entirely to the Lord. Thus can all the Lord's redeemed say, "Salvation is of the Lord." We cannot endure any doctrine which puts the crown upon the wrong head and defrauds the glorious King of his revenue of praise. Jehovah has done it all; yea; in Christ Jesus he *is* all, and therefore in our praises let him alone be extolled. It is a happy circumstance for us when we can praise God as alike our strength, song, and salvation; for God sometimes gives a secret strength to his people, and yet they question their own salvation, and cannot, therefore, sing of it. Many are, no doubt, truly saved, but at times they have so little strength, that they are ready to faint, and therefore they cannot sing: when strength is imparted and salvation is realised then the song is clear and full.

Verse 15. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* They sympathised in the delight of their leader and they abode in their tents in peace, rejoicing that one had been raised up who, in the name of the Lord, would protect them from their adversaries. The families of believers are happy, and they should take pains to give their happiness a voice by their family devotion. The dwelling place of saved men should be the temple of praise; it is but righteous that the righteous should praise the righteous God, who is their righteousness. The struggling hero knew that the voice of woe and lamentation was heard in the tents of his adversaries, for they had suffered severe defeat at his hands; but he was delighted by the remembrance that the nation for whom he had struggled would rejoice from one end of the land to the other at the deliverance which God had wrought by his means. That hero of heroes, the conquering Saviour, gives to all the families of his people abundant reasons for incessant song now that he has led captivity captive and ascended up on high. Let none of us be silent in our households: if we have salvation let us have joy, and if we have joy let us give it a tongue wherewith it may magnify the Lord. If we hearken carefully to

the music which comes from Israel's tents, we shall catch a stanza to this effect, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly: Jehovah has manifested his strength, given victory to his chosen champion, and overthrown all the armies of the foe. "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." When he comes to blows, woe to his mightiest opponent.

Verse 16. *The right hand of the LORD is exalted*, lifted up to smite the enemy, or extolled and magnified in the eyes of his people. It is the Lord's right hand, the hand of his skill, the hand of his greatest power, the hand which is accustomed to defend his saints. When that is lifted up, it lifts up all who trust in him, and it casts down all who resist him. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The Psalmist speaks in triplets, for he is praising the triune God, his heart is warm and he loves to dwell upon the note; he is not content with the praise he has rendered, he endeavours to utter it each time more fervently and more jubilantly than before. He had dwelt upon the sentence, "they compassed me about," for his peril from encircling armies was fully realised; and now he dwells upon the valour of Jehovah's right hand, for he has as vivid a sense of the presence and majesty of the Lord. How seldom is this the case: the Lord's mercy is forgotten and only the trial is remembered.

Verse 17. *I shall not die, but live.* His enemies hoped that he would die, and perhaps he himself feared he should perish at their hand: the news of his death may have been spread among his people, for the tongue of rumour is ever ready with ill news, the false intelligence would naturally cause great sorrow and despondency, but he proclaims himself as yet alive and as confident that he shall not fall by the hand of the destroyer. He is cheerfully assured that no arrow could carry death between the joints of his harness, and no weapon of any sort could end his career. His time had not yet come, he felt immortality beating within his bosom. Perhaps he had been sick, and brought to death's door, but he had a presentiment that the sickness was not unto death, but to the glory of God. At any rate, he knew that he should not so die as to give victory to the enemies of God; for the honour of God and the good of his people were both wrapped up in his continued success. Feeling that he would live he devoted himself to the noblest of purposes: he resolved to bear witness to the divine faithfulness, and declare the works of the LORD. He determined to recount the works of Jah; and he does so in this Psalm, wherein he dwells with love and admiration upon the splendour of Jehovah's prowess in the midst of the fight. While there is a testimony for God to be borne by us to any one, it is certain that we shall not be hurried from the land of the living. The Lord's prophets shall live on in the midst of famine, and war, and plague, and persecution, till they have uttered all the words of their prophecy; his priests shall stand at the altar unharmed till their last sacrifice has been presented before him. No bullet will find its billet in our hearts till we have finished our allotted period of activity, "Plagues and deaths around me fly,

Till he please I cannot die:

Not a single shaft can hit,

Till the God of love sees fit."

Verse 18. *The LORD hath chastened me sore.* This is faith's version of the former passage, "Thou hast thrust sore at me; "for the attacks of the enemy are chastisements from the hand of God. The devil tormented Job for his own purposes, but in reality the sorrows of the patriarch were chastisements from the Lord. "Chastening, Jah hath chastened me, "says our poet: as much as to say that the Lord had smitten him very severely, and made him sorrowfully to know the full weight of his rod. The Lord frequently appears to save his heaviest blows for his best beloved ones; if any one affliction be more painful than another it falls to, the lot of those whom he most distinguishes in his service. The gardener prunes his best roses with most care. Chastisement is sent to keep successful saints humble, to make them tender towards others, and to enable them to bear the high honours which their heavenly Friend puts upon them. But he hath not given me over unto death. This verse, like the thirteenth, concludes with a blessed "but, "which constitutes a saving clause. The Psalmist felt as if he had been beaten within an inch of his life, but yet death did not actually ensue. There is always a merciful limit to the scourging of the sons of God. Forty stripes save one were all that an Israelite might receive, and the Lord will never allow that one, that killing stroke, to fall upon his children. They are "chastened, but not killed"; their pains are for their instruction, not for their destruction. By these things the ungodly die, but gracious Hezekiah could say, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." No, blessed be the name of God, he may chastise us, but he will not condemn us; we must feel the smarting rod, but we shall not feel the killing sword. He does not give us over unto death at any time, and we may be quite sure that he has not done so while he condescends to chasten us, for if he intended our final rejection he would not take the pains to place us under his fatherly discipline. It may seem hard to be under the afflicting rod, but it would be a far more dreadful thing if the Lord were to say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." Even from our griefs we may distil consolation, and gather sweet flowers from the garden in which the Lord has planted salutary rue and wormwood. It is a cheering fact that if we endure chastening God dealeth with us as with sons, and we may well be satisfied with the common lot of his beloved family. The hero, restored to health, and rescued from the dangers of battle, now lifts up his own song unto the Lord, and asks all Israel, led on by the goodly fellowship of the priests, to assist him in chanting a joyful Te Deum.

Verse 20. *This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.* Psalmist loves the house of God so well that he admires the very gate thereof, and pauses beneath its arch to express his affection for it. He loved it because it was the gate of the Lord, he loved it because it was the gate of righteousness, because so many godly people had already entered it, and because in all future ages such persons will continue to pass through its portals. If the gate of the Lord's house on earth is so pleasant to us, how greatly shall we rejoice when we pass that gate of pearl, to which none but the

righteous shall ever approach, but through which all the just shall in due time enter to eternal felicity. The Lord Jesus has passed that way, and not only set the gate wide open, but secured an entrance for all those who are made righteous in his righteousness: all the righteous must and shall enter there, whoever may oppose them. Under another aspect our Lord is himself that gate, and through him, as the new and living Way, all the righteous delight to approach unto the Lord. Whenever we draw near to praise the Lord we must come by this gate; acceptable praise never climbs over the wall, or enters by any other way, but comes to God in Christ Jesus; as it is written, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Blessed, for ever blessed, be this wondrous gate of the person of our Lord.

Verse 21. Having entered, the champion exclaims, *I will praise thee*, not "I will praise the Lord," for now he vividly realizes the divine presence, and addresses himself directly to Jehovah, whom his faith sensibly discerns. How well it is in all our songs of praise to let the heart have direct and distinct communion with God himself! The Psalmist's song was personal praise too:—"I will praise thee"; resolute praise, for he firmly resolved to offer it; spontaneous praise, for he voluntarily and cheerfully rendered it, and continuous praise, for he did not intend soon to have done with it. It was a life long vow to which there would never come a close, "I will praise thee." For thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. He praises God by mentioning his favours, weaving his song out of the divine goodness which he had experienced. In these words he gives the reason for his praise,—his answered prayer, and the deliverance which he had received in consequence. How fondly he dwells upon the personal interposition of God! "*Thou* hast heard me." How heartily he ascribes the whole of his victory over his enemies to God; nay, he sees God himself to be the whole of it: "*Thou* art become my salvation." It is well to go directly to God himself, and not to stay even in his mercy, or in the acts of his grace. Answered prayers bring God very near to us; realised salvation enables us to realise the immediate presence of God. Considering the extreme distress through which the worshipper had passed, it is not at all wonderful that he should feel his heart full of gratitude at the great salvation which God had wrought for him, and should at his first entrance into the temple lift up his voice in thankful praise for personal favours so great, so needful, so perfect. This passage (Ps 118:22-27) will appear to be a mixture of the expressions of the people and of the hero himself.

Verse 22. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.* Here the people magnify God for bringing his chosen servant into the honourable office, which had been allotted to him by divine decree. A wise king and valiant leader is a stone by which the national fabric is built up. David had been rejected by those in authority, but God had placed him in a position of the highest honour and the greatest usefulness, making him the chief cornerstone of the state. In the case of many others whose early life has been spent in conflict, the Lord has been pleased to accomplish his divine purposes in like manner; but to none is this text so applicable as to the Lord

Jesus himself: he is the living stone, the tried stone, elect, precious, which God himself appointed from of old. The Jewish builders, scribe, priest, Pharisee, and Herodian, rejected him with disdain. They could see no excellence in him that they should build upon him; he could not be made to fit in with their ideal of a national church, he was a stone of another quarry from themselves, and not after their mind nor according to their taste; therefore they cast him away and poured contempt upon him, even as Peter said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders"; they reckoned him to be as nothing, though he is Lord of all. In raising him from the dead the Lord God exalted him to be the head of his church, the very pinnacle of her glory and beauty. Since then he has become the confidence of the Gentiles, even of them that are afar off upon the sea, and thus he has joined the two walls of Jew and Gentile into one stately temple, and is seen to be the binding cornerstone, making both one. This is a delightful subject for contemplation. Jesus in all things hath the preeminence, he is the principal stone of the whole house of God. We are accustomed to lay some one stone of a public building with solemn ceremony, and to deposit in it any precious things which may have been selected as a memorial of the occasion: henceforth that cornerstone is looked upon as peculiarly honourable, and joyful memories are associated with it. All this is in a very emphatic sense true of our blessed Lord, "The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." God himself laid him where he is, and hid within him all the precious things of the eternal covenant; and there he shall for ever remain, the foundation of all our hopes, the glory of all our joys, the united bond of all our fellowship. He is "the head over all things to the church, "and by him the church is fitly framed together, and groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ: nevertheless, he holds his true position amongst his people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that his truth shall be exalted over all. Those who reject the chosen stone will stumble against him to their own hurt, and ere long will come his second advent, when he will fall upon them from the heights of heaven, and grind them to powder.

Verse 23. *This is the LORD'S doing.* The exalted position of Christ in his church is not the work of man, and does not depend for its continuation upon any builders or ministers; God himself has wrought the exaltation of our Lord Jesus. Considering the opposition which comes from the wisdom, the power, and the authority of this world, it is manifest that if the kingdom of Christ be indeed set up and maintained in the world it must be by supernatural power. Indeed, it is so even in the smallest detail. Every grain of true faith in this world is a divine creation, and every hour in which the true church subsists is a prolonged miracle. It is not the goodness of human nature, nor the force of reasoning, which exalts Christ, and builds up the church, but a power from above. This staggers the adversary, for he cannot understand what it is which baffles him: of the Holy Ghost He knows

nothing. It is marvellous in our eyes. We actually see it; it is not in our thoughts and hopes and prayers alone, but the astonishing work is actually before our eyes. Jesus reigns, his power is felt, and we perceive that it is so. Faith sees our great Master, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; she sees and marvels. It never ceases to astonish us, as we see, even here below, God by means of weakness defeating power, by the simplicity of his word baffling the craft of men, and by the invisible influence of his Spirit exalting his Son in human hearts in the teeth of open and determined opposition. It is indeed "marvellous in our eyes, "as all God's works must be if men care to study them. In the Hebrew the passage reads, "*It is wonderfully done*": not only is the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth itself wonderful, but the way in which it is brought about is marvellous: it is wonderfully done. The more we study the history of Christ and his church the more fully shall we agree with this declaration.

Verse 24. *This is the day which the LORD hath made.* A new era has commenced. The day of David's enthronement was the beginning of better times for Israel; and in a far higher sense the day of our Lord's resurrection is a new day of God's own making, for it is the dawn of a blessed dispensation. No doubt the Israelitish nation celebrated the victory of its champion with a day of feasting, music and song; and surely it is but meet that we should reverently keep the feast of the triumph of the Son of David. We observe the Lord's day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer. Whenever the soft Sabbath light of the first day of the week breaks upon the earth, let us sing,

"This is the day the Lord hath made,
He calls the hours his own;
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne."

We by no means wish to confine the reference of the passage to the Sabbath, for the whole gospel day is the day of God's making, and its blessings come to us through our Lord's being placed as the head of the corner. We will rejoice and be glad in it. What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to be specially joyous on the Sabbath: it is the queen of days, and its hours should be clad in royal apparel of delight. George Herbert says of it:

"Thou art a day of mirth,
And where the weekdays trail on ground,
Thy flight is higher as thy birth."

Entering into the midst of the church of God, and beholding the Lord Jesus as all in all in the assemblies of his people, we are bound to overflow with joy. Is it not written, "then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord"? When the King makes the house of prayer to be a banqueting house, and we have grace to enjoy fellowship with him, both in his sufferings and in his triumphs, we feel an intense delight, and we are glad to express it with the rest of his people.

Verse 25. *Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD.* Hosanna! God save our king! Let David reign! Or as we who live in these latter days interpret it,—Let the Son of David live for ever, let his saving help go forth throughout all nations. This was the peculiar shout of the feast of tabernacles; and so long as we dwell here below in these tabernacles of clay we cannot do better than use the same cry. Perpetually let us pray that our glorious King may work salvation in the midst of the earth. We plead also for ourselves that the Lord would save us, deliver us, and continue to sanctify us. This we ask with great earnestness, beseeching it of Jehovah. Prayer should always be an entreating and beseeching. O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Let the church be built up: through the salvation of sinners may the number of the saints be increased; through the preservation of saints may the church be strengthened, continued, beautified, perfected. Our Lord Jesus himself pleads for the salvation and the prosperity of his chosen; as our Intercessor before the throne he asks that the heavenly Father would save and keep those who were of old committed to his charge, and cause them to be one through the indwelling Spirit. Salvation had been given, and therefore it is asked for. Strange though it may seem, he who cries for salvation is already in a measure saved. None can so truly cry, "Save, I beseech thee," as those who have already participated in salvation; and the most prosperous church is that which most imploringly seeks prosperity. It may seem strange that, returning from victory, flushed with triumph, the hero should still ask for salvation; but so it is, and it could not be otherwise. When all our Saviour's work and warfare were ended, his intercession became even more prominently a feature of his life; after he had conquered all his foes he made intercession for the transgressors. What is true of him is true of his church also, for whenever she obtains the largest measure of spiritual blessing she is then most inclined to plead for more. She never pants so eagerly for prosperity as when she sees the Lord's doings in her midst, and marvels at them. Then, encouraged by the gracious visitation, she sets apart her solemn days of prayer, and cries with passionate desire, "Save now," and "Send now prosperity." She would fain take the tide at the flood, and make the most of the day of which the Lord has already made so much.

Verse 26. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD. The champion had done everything "in the name of the Lord": in that name he had routed all his adversaries, and had risen to the throne, and in that name he had now entered the temple to pay his vows. We know who it is that cometh in the name of the Lord beyond all others. In the Psalmist's days he was The Coming One, and he is still The Coming One, though he hath already come. We are ready with our hosannas both for his first

and second advent; our inmost souls thankfully adore and bless him and upon his head unspeakable joys. "Prayer also shall be made for him continually: and daily shall he be praised." For his sake everybody is blessed to us who comes in the name of the Lord, we welcome all such to our hearts and our homes; but chiefly, and beyond all others, we welcome *himself* when he deigns to enter in and sup with us and we with him. O sacred bliss, fit antepast of heaven! Perhaps this sentence is intended to be the benediction of the priests upon the valiant servant of the Lord, and if so, it is appropriately added, We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. The priests whose business it was to bless the people, in a sevenfold degree blessed the people's deliverer, the one chosen out of the people whom the Lord had exalted. All those whose high privilege it is to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, because they are made priests unto God in Christ Jesus, can truly say that they bless the Christ who has made them what they are, and placed them where they are. Whenever we feel ourselves at home with God, and feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba Father, "the first thought of our hearts should be to bless the elder Brother, through whom the privilege of sonship has descended to such unworthy ones. In looking back upon our past lives we can remember many delightful occasions in which with joy unutterable we have in the fulness of our heart blessed our Saviour and our King; and all these memorable seasons are so many foretastes and pledges of the time when in the house of our great Father above we shall for ever sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, "and with rapture bless the Redeemer's name.

Verse 27. *God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light,* or "God is Jehovah, "the only living and true God. There is none other God but he. The words may also be rendered, "Mighty is Jehovah." Only the power of God could have brought us such light and joy as spring from the work of our Champion and King. We have received light, by which we have known the rejected stone to be the head of the corner, and this light has led us to enlist beneath the banner of the once despised Nazarene, who is now the Prince of the kings of the earth. With the light of knowledge has come the light of joy; for we are delivered from the powers of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Our knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ came not by the light of nature, nor by reason, nor did it arise from the sparks which we ourselves had kindled, nor did we receive it of men; but the mighty God alone hath showed it to us. He made a day on purpose that he might shine upon us like the sun, and he made our faces to shine in the light of that day, according to the declaration of the twenty-fourth verse. Therefore, unto him be all the honour of our enlightenment. Let us do our best to magnify the great Father of lights from whom our present blessedness has descended. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Some think that by this we are taught that the king offered so many sacrifices that the whole area of the court was filled, and the sacrifices were bound even up to the altar; but we are inclined to keep to our own version, and to believe that sometimes restive bullocks were bound to the altar before they were slain, in which case Mant's

verse is correct":

"He, Jehovah, is our Lord:

He, our God, on us hath shined:

Bind the sacrifice with cord,

To the horned altar bind."

The word rendered "cords" carries with it the idea of wreaths and boughs, so that it was not a cord of hard, rough rope, but a decorated band; even as in our case, though we are bound to the altar of God, it is with the cords of love and the bands of a man, and not by a compulsion which destroys the freedom of the will. The sacrifice which we would present in honour of the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ is the living sacrifice of our spirit, soul, and body. We bring ourselves to his altar, and desire to offer him all that we have and are. There remains a tendency in our nature to start aside from this; it is not fond of the sacrificial knife. In the warmth of our love we come willingly to the altar, but we need constraining power to keep us there in the entirety of our being throughout the whole of life. Happily there is a cord which, twisted around the atonement, or, better still, around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only Altar, can hold us, and does hold us: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that he died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." We are bound to the doctrine of atonement; we are bound to Christ himself, who is both altar and sacrifice; we desire to be more bound to him than ever, our soul finds her liberty in being tethered fast to the altar of the Lord. The American Board of Missions has for its seal an ox, with an altar on one side and a plough on the other, and the motto "Ready for either, "—ready to live and labour, or ready to suffer and die. We would gladly spend ourselves for the Lord actively, or be spent by him passively, whichever may be his will; but since we know the rebellion of our corrupt nature we earnestly pray that we may be kept in this consecrated mind, and that we may never, under discouragements, or through the temptations of the world, be permitted to leave the altar, to which it is our intense desire to be for ever fastened. Such consecration as this, and such desires for its perpetuity, well beseem that day of gladness which the Lord hath made so bright by the glorious triumph of his Son, our covenant head, our well beloved. Now comes the closing song of the champion, and of each one of his admirers.

Verse 28. *Thou art my God, and I will praise thee, my mighty God who hath done this mighty and marvellous thing. Thou shalt be mine, and all the praise my soul is capable of shall be poured forth at thy feet. Thou art my God, I will exalt thee. Thou hast exalted me, and as far as my praises can do it, I will exalt thy name. Jesus is magnified, and he magnifies the Father according to his prayer, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."* God hath given us grace and promised us glory, and we are constrained to ascribe all grace to him, and all the glory of it also. The

repetition indicates a double determination, and sets forth the firmness of the resolution, the heartiness of the affection, the intensity of the gratitude. Our Lord Jesus himself saith, "I will praise thee"; and well may each one of us, humbly and with confidence in divine grace, add, on his own account, the same declaration, "I will praise thee." However others may blaspheme thee, I will exalt thee; however dull and cold I may sometimes feel myself, yet will I rouse up my nature, and determine that as long as I have any being that being shall be spent to thy praise. For ever thou art my God, and for ever I will give thee thanks.

Verse 29. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.* The Psalm concludes as it began, making a complete circle of joyful adoration. We can well suppose that the notes at the close of the loud hallelujah were more swift, more sweet, more loud than at the beginning. To the sound of trumpet and harp, Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that feared the Lord, forgetting their distinctions, joined in one common hymn, testifying again to their deep gratitude to the Lord's goodness, and to the mercy which is unto eternity. What better close could there be to this right royal song? The Psalmist would have risen to something higher, so as to end with a climax, but nothing loftier remained. He had reached the height of his grandest argument, and there he paused. The music ceased, the song was suspended, the great hallel was all chanted, and the people went every one to his own home, quietly and happily musing upon the goodness of the Lord, whose mercy fills eternity.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This is the last of those Psalms which form the great *Hallel*, which the Jews sang at the end of the passover. *Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm. The whole Psalm has a peculiar formation. It resembles the *Maschal* Psalms, for each verse has of itself its completed sense, its own scent and hue; one thought is joined to another as branch to branch and flower to flower. *Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm. Nothing can surpass the force and majesty, as well as the richly varied beauty, of this Psalm. Its general burden is quite manifest. It is the prophetic expression, by the Spirit of Christ, of that exultant strain of anticipative triumph, wherein the virgin daughter of Zion will laugh to scorn, in the immediate prospect of her Deliverer's advent, the congregated armies of the Man of Sin (Ps 118:10-13). *Arthur Pridham.*

Whole Psalm. The two Psalms, 117th and 118th, are placed together because, though each is a distinct portion in itself, the 117th is an exordium to that which follows it, an address and an invitation to the Gentile and heathen world to acknowledge and praise Jehovah.

We are now arrived at the concluding portion of the hymn, which Christ and his disciples sung preparatory to their going forth to the Mount of Olives. Nothing could be more appropriate or better

fitted to comfort and encourage, at that awful period, than a prophecy which, overleaping the suffering to be endured, showed forth the glory that was afterwards to follow, and a song of triumph, then only recited, but in due time to be literally acted, when the cross was to be succeeded by a crown. This Psalm is not only frequently quoted in the New Testament, but it was also partially applied at one period of our Saviour's sojourn on earth, and thus we are afforded decisive testimony to the purpose for which it is originally and prophetically destined. It was partially used at the time when Messiah, in the days of his humiliation, was received with triumph and acclamation into Jerusalem; and we may conclude it will be fully enacted, when our glorified and triumphant Lord, coming with ten thousand of his saints, will again stand upon the earth and receive the promised salutation, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of Jehovah." This dramatic representation of Messiah coming in glory, to take his great power and reign among us, is apportioned to the chief character, "the King of kings and Lord of lords, "to his saints following him in procession, and to priests and Levites, representing the Jewish nation.

The Conqueror and his attendants sing the 117th Psalm, an introductory hymn, inviting all, Jews and Gentiles, to share in the merciful kindness of God, and to sing his praises. It is a gathering together of all the Lord's people, to be witnesses and partakers of his glory. Ps 118:1-3 are sung by single voices. As the procession moves along, the theme of rejoicing is announced. The first voice repeats, *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.* Another single voice calls on Israel to acknowledge this great truth; and a third invites the house of Aaron, the priesthood, to acknowledge their share in Jehovah's love. Ps 118:4 is a chorus; the whole procession, the living: and the dead who are raised to meet Christ (1Th 4:16), shout aloud the burden of the song, Ps 118:1. Arrived at the temple gate, or rather, the gate of Jerusalem, the Conqueror alone sings, Ps 118:5-7. He begins by recounting the circumstances of his distress. Next, he tells of his refuge: I betook me to God, I told him my sorrows, and he heard me. The procession, in chorus, sings Ps 118:8-9, taking up the substance of Messiah's chaunt, and fully echoing the sentiment, *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* The Conqueror alone again sings Ps 118:10-14. He enlarges on the magnitude of his dangers, and the hopelessness of his situation. It was not a common difficulty, or a single enemy, whole nations compassed him about. The procession in chorus, Ps 118:15-16, attributes their Lord's gloat deliverance to his righteous person, and to his righteous cause. Justice and equity and truth, all demanded that Messiah should not be trodden down. "Was it not thine arm, O Jehovah, which has gotten thee the victory?" Messiah now takes up the language of a conqueror, Ps 118:17-19. My sufferings were sore, but they were only for a season. I laid down my life, and I now take it up again: and then, with a loud voice, as when he roused Lazarus out of the grave, he cries to those within the walls, *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD.* The priests and Levites within instantly

obey his command, and while they throw open the gates, they sing, *This is the gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter*. As he enters, the Conqueror alone repeats Ps 118:21. His sorrows are ended, his victory is complete. The objects for which he lived and died, and for which his prayers were offered, are now fulfilled, and thus, in a few short words, he expresses his joy and gratitude to God. The priests and Levites sing in chorus Ps 118:22-24. Depositories and expounders of the prophecies as they had long been, they now, for the first time, quote and apply one, Isa 28:16, which held a conspicuous place, but never before was intelligible to Jewish ears. "The man of sorrows, "the stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. The Conqueror is now within the gates, and proceeds to accomplish his good purpose, Lu 1:68. *Hosannah, save thy people, O LORD, and send them now prosperity*, Ps 118:25. The priests and Levites are led by the Spirit to use the words foretold by our Lord, Mt 28:39. Now at length the veil is removed, and his people say, *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, Ps 118:26. The Conqueror and his train (Ps 118:27) now praise God, who has given light and deliverance and salvation, and they offer to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving for all that they enjoy. The Conqueror alone (Ps 118:28) next makes a solemn acknowledgment of gratitude and praise to Jehovah, and then, all being within the gates, the united body, triumphant procession, priests and Levites, end, as they commenced, *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever*. R. H. Ryland, in *"The Psalms restored to Messiah"*, 1853.

Whole Psalm. It was Luther's favourite Psalm, his beautiful *Confitemini*, which "had helped him out of what neither emperor nor king, nor any other man on earth, could have helped him." With the exposition of this his noblest jewel, his defence and his treasure, he occupied himself in the solitude of his Patmos (Coburg). *Franz Delitzsch*.

Whole Psalm. This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all; I love all holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine. It has saved me from many a pressing danger, from which nor emperor, nor kings, nor sages, nor saints, could have saved me. It is my friend; dearer to me than all the honours and power of the earth... But it may be objected, that this Psalm is common to all; no one has a right to call it his own. Yes; but Christ is also common to all, and yet Christ is mine. I am not jealous of my property; I would divide it with the whole world... And would to God that all men would claim the Psalm as especially theirs! It would be the most touching quarrel, the most agreeable to God—a quarrel of union and perfect charity. *Luther. From his Dedication of his Translation of Psalm 118 to the Abbot Frederick of Nuremberg*.

Verse 1. *For he is good*. The praise of God could not be expressed in fewer words than these, "*For he is good*." I see not what can be more solemn than this brevity, since goodness is so peculiarly the quality of God, that the Son of God himself when addressed by some one as "Good Master, "by one,

namely, who beholding his flesh, and comprehending not the fulness of his divine nature, considered him as man only, replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." And what is this but to say, If you wish to call me good, recognize me as God? *Augustine.*

Verse 1. *His mercy endureth for ever.* What the close of Psalm 117 says of God's truth, viz., that it endureth for ever, Ps 118:1-4 says of its sister, his mercy or lovingkindness. *Franz Delitzsch.*

Verses 1-4. As the salvation of the elect is one, and the love of God to them one, so should their song be one, as here four several times it is said, *His mercy endureth for ever.* *David Dickson.*

Verses 1-4. Because we hear the sentence so frequently repeated here, that "*the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever,*" we are not to think that the Holy Spirit has employed empty tautology, but our great necessity demands it: for in temptations and dangers the flesh begins to doubt of the mercy of God; therefore nothing should be so frequently impressed on the mind as this, that the mercy of God does not fail, that the Eternal Father wearies not in remitting our sins. *Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 2. *Let Israel now say.* Albeit all the elect have interest in God's praise for mercies purchased by Christ unto them, yet the elect of Israel have the first room in the song; for Christ is first promised to them, and came of them according to the flesh, and will be most marvellous about them. *David Dickson.*

Verse 2. *Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.* Let such who have had an experience of it, acknowledge and declare it to others; not only believe it with their hearts, and privately give thanks for it, but with the mouth make confession of it to the glory of divine grace. *John Gill.*

Verse 2-4. Now. Beware of delaying. Delays be dangerous, our hearts will cool, and our affections will fall down. It is good then to be doing while it is called *today*, while it is called *now*. *Now, now, now,* saith David; there be three *nows*, and all to teach us that for aught we know, it is *now* or never, today or not at all; we must praise God while the heart is hot, else our iron will cool. Satan hath little hope to prevail unless he can persuade us to omit our duties when the clock strikes, and therefore his skill is to urge us to put it off till another time as fitter or better. Do it anon, next hour, next day, next week (saith he); and why not next year? Hereafter (saith he) it will be as well as now. This he saith indeed, but his meaning (by hereafter) is never: and he that is not fit today, hath no promise but he shall be more unapt tomorrow. We have neither God nor our own hearts at command; and when we have lost the opportunity, God to correct us perhaps will not give us affections. The cock within shall not crow to awaken us, the sun shall not shine, and then we are in danger to give over quite; and if we come once to a total omission of one duty, why not of another, and of another, and so of all? and then farewell to us. *Richard Capel (1586-1656) in "Tentations, their Nature, Danger, Cure."*

Verse 4. *Them that fear the LORD.* Who were neither of "the house of Aaron," that is, of the priests or Levites; nor of "the house of Israel," that is, native Jews; yet might be of the Jewish religion, and "*fear the LORD.*" These were called *proselytes*, and are here invited to praise the Lord. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4. *God's mercy endureth for ever.* That is, his covenant mercy, that precious church privilege: this is perpetual to his people, and should perpetually remain as a memorial in our hearts. And therefore it is that this is the foot or burden of these first four verses. Neither is there any idle repetition, but a notable expression of the saints' insatiableness of praising God for his never failing mercy. These heavenly birds having got a note, sing it over and over. In the last Psalm there are but six verses, yet twelve Hallelujahs. *Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5. Perhaps Ps 118:5, which says, *I called upon the LORD in distress* (literally, out of the narrow gorge), *and the LORD answered me on the open plain*—which describes the deliverance of Israel from their captivity,—may have been sung as they defiled from a narrow ravine into the plain; and when they arrived at the gate of the temple, then they broke forth in full chorus into the words, "Open to me the gates of righteousness" (Ps 118:19). *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5. It is said, *I called upon the LORD.* Thou must learn to call, and not to sit there by thyself, and lie on the bench, hang and shake thy head, and bite and devour thyself with thy thoughts; but come on, thou indolent knave, down upon thy knees, up with thy hands and eyes to heaven, take a Psalm or a prayer, and set forth thy distress with tears before God. *Martin Luther.*

Verse 5. *The LORD answered me, and set me in a large place.* It may be rendered, *The LORD answered me largely*; as he did Solomon, when he gave him more than he asked for; and as he does his people, when he gives them a sufficiency and an abundance of his grace; not only above their deserts, but above their thoughts and expectations. See Eph 3:20. *John Gill.*

Verse 6. *The LORD is on my side.* The reason which the Psalmist gives here for his trusting, or for his not fearing, is the great fact, that the Lord is on his side; and the prominent idea which this brings before us is *Alliance; the making common cause*, which the great God undoubtedly does, with imperfect, yet with earnest, trusting man. We know very well the great anxiety shown by men, in all their worldly conflicts, to secure the aid of a powerful ally; in their lawsuits, to retain the services of a powerful advocate; or, in their attempts at worldly advancement, to win the friendship and interest of those who can further the aims they have in view. When Herod was highly displeased with the armies of Tyre and Sidon, they did not venture to approach him until they had made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend. If such and such a person be on their side, men think that all must go well. Who so well off as he who is able to say, *The LORD is on my side?* *Philip Bennet Power, in "The Will's of the Psalms," 1861.*

Verse 6. God is with those he calls and employs in public service. Joshua was exhorted to be strong and of good courage, "For the Lord thy God is with thee" (Jos 1:9). So also was Jeremiah, "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee" (Jer 1:8). God's presence should put life into us. When inferior natures are backed with a superior, they are full of courage: when the master is by, the dog will venture upon creatures greater than himself and fear not; at another time he will not do it

when his master is absent. When God is with us, who is the supreme, it should make us fearless. It did David; *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me.* Let him do his worst, frown, threat, plot, arm, strike; the Lord is on my side, he hath a special care for me, he is a shield unto me, I will not fear, but hope; as it is in the next verse. "I shall see my desire on them that hate me, "I shall see them changed or ruined. Our help is in the name of the Lord, but our fears are in the name of man. *William Green hill.*

Verse 6. *I will not fear.* David, (or God's people, if you will,) being taught by experience, exults in great confidence, but does not say, the Lord is my helper, and I shall suffer no more, knowing that while he is a pilgrim here below he will have much to suffer from his daily enemies; but he says, *The LORD is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.* *Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 6. *Man* does not here mean a man, but mankind, or man as opposed to God. *Joseph Addison, Alexander.*

Verse 8. It may perhaps be considered beneath the dignity and solemnity of our subject to remark, that this 8th verse of this Psalm is the middle verse of the Bible. There are, I believe, 31,174 verses in all, and this is the 15,587th. I do not wish, nor would I advise you to occupy your time in counting for yourselves, nor should I indeed have noticed the subject at all, but that I wish to suggest one remark upon it, and that is, that though we may generally look upon such calculations as only laborious idleness,—and they certainly have been carried to the most minute dissection of every part of Scripture, such as to how many times the word "Lord, "the word "GOD, " and even the word "and, "occurs,—yet I believe that the integrity of the holy volume owes a vast deal to this scruple weighing of these calculators. I do not say, nor do I think, that they had such motives in their minds; but whatever their reasons were, I cannot but think that there was an overruling Providence in thus converting these trifling and apparently useless investigations into additional guards and fences around the sacred text. *Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 8. *It is better to trust in the LORD,* etc. Luther on this text calleth it, *artem artium, et mirificam, ac suam artem, non fidere hominibus,* that is, the art of arts, and that which he had well studied, not to put confidence in man: as for trust in God, he calleth it *sacrificium omnium gratissimum et suavissimum, et cultum omnium pulcherrimum,* the most pleasant and sweetest of all sacrifices, the best of all services we perform to God. *John Trapp.*

Verse 8. *It is better to trust in the LORD.* All make this acknowledgment, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who is fully persuaded that God alone can afford him sufficient help. That man has attained a high rank among the faithful, who resting satisfied in God, never ceases to entertain a lively hope, even when he finds no help upon earth. *John Calvin.*

Verse 8. It is a great cause oftentimes why God blesseth not means, because we are so apt to trust in them, and rob God of his glory, not waiting for a blessing at his hands. This causeth the Lord to

cross us, and to curse his own benefits, because we seek not him, but sacrifice to our own nets, putting confidence in outward means. Therefore when we hope for help from them, God bloweth upon them, and turneth them to our hurt and destruction. *Abraham Wright.*

Verse 8. When my enemies have been brought to contempt, let not my friend present himself unto me as a good man, and bid me repose my hope in himself; for still must I trust in the Lord alone. *Augustine.*

Verses 8-9. Nothing is more profitable than dwelling on familiar truths. Was there ever a good man who did not believe that it was better to trust in Jehovah than rely on any created arm? Yet David here repeats this truth, that if possible it may sink deep into every mind. *William S. Plumer.*

Verse 9. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* David knew that by experience, for he confided in Saul his king, at another time in Achish, the Philistine, at another time in Ahithophel his own most prudent minister, besides some others; and they all failed him; but he never confided in God without feeling the benefit of it. *Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 9. *It is better,* etc. Literally, "Good is it to trust in Jehovah more than to confide in man." This is the Hebrew form of comparison, and is equivalent to what is stated in our version. "It is *better,*" etc. It is better, (1) because man is weak,—but God is Almighty; (2) because man is selfish,—but God is benevolent; (3) because man is often faithless and deceitful,—God never; (4) because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be,—but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us; and (5) because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to the present life,—the power of God will be commensurate with eternity. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9. *Than to put confidence in princes.* Great men's words, saith one, are like dead men's shoes; he may go barefoot that waiteth for them. *John Trapp.*

Verse 9. They who constantly attend upon God, and depend upon him, have a much sweeter life, than those that wait upon princes with great observance and expectation. A servant of the Lord is better provided for than the greatest favourites and minions of princes. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 11. Whether Tertullus persecute the church with his tongue, or Elymas with his hand, God hath the command of both. Indeed the wicked are the mediate causes of our troubles: the righteous are as the centre, the other the circumference; which way soever they turn, they find themselves environed; yet still the centre is fixed and immovable, being founded upon Christ. It is good for some men to have adversaries; for often they more fear to sin, lest they should despise them, than dislike it for conscience, lest God should condemn them. They speak evil of us: if true, let us amend it; if false, contemn it; whether false or true, observe it. Thus we shall learn good out of their evil; make them our tutors, and give them our pupillage. In all things let us match them, in nothing fear them: "which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation," *Php 1:28.* The church is that tower of

David; if there be a thousand weapons to wound us, there are a thousand shields to guard us, So 4:4.
Thomas Adams.

Verse 12. *They compassed me about like bees.* Christ's enemies are so spiteful, that in fighting against his kingdom, they regard not what become of themselves, so they may hurt his people; but as the bee undoes herself in stinging, and loses her life or her power with her sting, so do they. All that the enemies of Christ's church can do against his people is but to trouble them externally; their wounds are like the sting of a bee, that is, unto pain and swelling, and a short trouble only, but are not deadly. *David Dickson.*

Verse 12. *They compassed me about like bees.* Now, as the north east wind of course was adverse to any north east progress, it was necessary that the boat should be towed by the crew. As the rope was being drawn along through the grass on the banks it happened that it disturbed a swarm of bees. In a moment, like a great cloud, they burst upon the men who were dragging; everyone of them threw himself headlong into the water and hurried to regain the boat. The swarm followed at their heels, and in a few seconds filled every nook and cranny of the deck. What a scene of confusion ensued may readily be imagined. Without any foreboding of ill, I was arranging my plants in my cabin, when I heard all around me a scampering which I took at first to be merely the frolics of my people, as that was the order of the day. I called out to enquire the meaning of the noise, but only got excited gestures and reproachful looks in answer. The cry of "Bees! bees!" soon broke upon my ear, and I proceeded to light a pipe. My attempt was entirely in vain; in an instant bees in thousands are about me, and I am mercilessly stung all over my face and hands. To no purpose do I try to protect my face with a handkerchief, and the more violently I fling my hands about, so much the more violent becomes the impetuosity of the irritated insects. The maddening pain is now on my cheek, now in my eye, now in my hair. The dogs from under my bed burst out frantically, overturning everything in their way. Losing well nigh all control over myself, I fling myself into the river; I dive down, but all in vain, for the stings rain down still upon my head. Not heeding the warning of my people, I creep through the reedy grass to the swampy bank. The grass lacerates my hands, and I try to gain the mainland, hoping to find shelter in the woods. All at once four powerful arms seize me and drag me back with such force that I think I must be choked in the mud. I am compelled to go back on board, and flight is not to be thought of... I felt ready, in the evening, for an encounter with half a score of buffaloes or a brace of lions rather than have anything more to do with bees; and this was a sentiment in which all the ship's company heartily concurred. *George Schweinfurth, in "The Heart of Africa," 1873.*

Verse 12. David said of his enemies, that they came about him like *bees*; he doth not say like wasps. For though they used their stings, yet he found honey in them too. *Peter Smith, 1644.*

Verse 12. *They compassed me about like bees.*
As wasps, provoked by children in their play,

Pour from their mansions by the broad highway,
In swarms the guiltless traveller engage,
Whet all their stings, and call forth all their rage,
All rise in arms, and with a general cry,
Assert their waxen domes, and buzzing progeny;
Thus from the tents the fervent legion swarms,
So loud their clamours, and so keen their arms. *Homer.*

Verse 12. *They are quenched as the fire of thorns.* The illustration from the "fire of thorns" is derived from the fact that they quickly kindle into a blaze, and then the flame soon dies away. In Eastern countries it was common to burn over their fields in the dry time of the year, and thus to clear them of thorns and briars and weeds. Of course, at such a time they would kindle quickly, and burn rapidly, and would soon be consumed. So the Psalmist says it was with his enemies. He came upon them, numerous as they were, as the fire runs over a field in a dry time, burning everything before it. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 12. *In the name of the LORD.* This has been understood as the *tessera*, the sentence of attack, or signal to engage, like those of Cyrus—Jupiter is our leader and ally—Jupiter our captain and preserver. Cyropaed. 1. 3 and 7; and Gideon, Jud 7:18. This interpretation being only founded on the repetition, may it not more probably be designed as suited to the musical performance? *Samuel Burder.*

Verse 13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.* The apostrophe is strong, and probably directed to some particular person in the battle, who had put David in great danger. *Samuel Burder.*

Verse 13. *Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall.* Thou hast indeed. Thou hast done thy part, O Satan, and it has been well done. Thou hast known all my weakest parts, thou hast seen where my armour was not buckled on tightly, and thou hast attacked me at the right time and in the right way. The great Spanish poet, Calderon, tells of one who wore a heavy suit of armour for a whole year, and laid it by for one hour, and in that hour the enemy came, and the man paid for his negligence with his life. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." *John Mason Neale.*

Verse 14. *The LORD is my strength and song, and as become my salvation.* "My strength, "that I am able to resist my enemies; "my salvation, "that I am delivered from my enemies; "my song, "that I may joyfully praise him and sing of him after I am delivered. *William Nicholson, 1662.*

Verse 14. Good songs, good promises, good proverbs, good doctrines are none the worse for age. What was sung just after the passage of the Red Sea, is here sung by the prophet, and shall be sung to the end of the world by the saints of the Most High. *William S. Plumer.*

Verse 14. *And is become my salvation.* Not that he hath become anything which he was not before,

but because his people, when they believed on him, became what they were not before, and then he began to be salvation unto them when turned towards him, which he was not to them when turned away from himself. *Augustine.*

Verse 15. *Thy voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* Every one should be careful that his dwelling is one of the *tabernacles of the righteous*, and that he himself together with his household should walk in righteousness (Lu 1:75). And he should be so diligent in hymns and sacred songs, that his rooms should resound with them. *Martin Geier.*

Verse 16. *The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.* Thrice he celebrates God's right hand, to set forth his earnest desire to say the utmost; or, in reference to the Sacred Trinity, as some will have it. *John Trapp.*

Verse 17. *I shall not die, but live.* As Christ is risen, "we shall not die, but live"; we shall not die eternally, but we shall live in this world, the life of grace, and in the world to come, the life of glory; that we may in both declare the "works" and chant the praises of God our Saviour. We are "chastened" for our sins, but "not given over to death" and destruction everlasting; nay, our being "chastened" is now a proof that we are not so given over; "for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Heb 12:7. *George Horne.*

Verse 17. *I shall not die, but live.* To live, signifies, not barely to live, but to live comfortably, to have content with our life; to live is to prosper. Thus the word is often used in Scripture. "*I shall not die, but live.*" David did not look upon himself as immortal, or that he should never die; he knew he was subject to the statute of death: but the meaning is, I shall not die now, I shall not die by the hands of these men, I shall not die the death which they have designed me to; or when he saith, "*I shall not die, but live,*" his meaning is, I shall live comfortably and prosperously, I shall live as a king. That which we translate (1Sa 10:24) "God save the king, "is, "Let the king *live,* "that is, let him prosper, and have good days; let him have peace with all, or victory over his enemies. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 17. *I shall not die,* etc. The following incident is worth recording: "Wycliffe was now getting old, but the Reformer was worn out rather by the harassing attacks of his foes, and his incessant and ever growing labours, than with the weight of years, for he was not yet sixty. He fell sick. With unbounded joy the friars heard that their great enemy was dying. Of course he was overwhelmed with horror and remorse for the evil he had done them, and they would hasten to his bedside and receive the expression of his penitence and sorrow. In a trice a little crowd of shaven crowns assembled round the couch of the sick man—delegates from the four orders of friars. They began fair, 'wishing him health and restoration from his distemper'; but speedily changing their tone, they exhorted him, as one on the brink of the grave, to make full confession, and express his unfeigned grief for the injuries he had inflicted on their order. Wycliffe lay silent till they should have made an end, then, making his servant raise him a little on his pillow, and fixing his keen eyes upon them, he said with a loud voice,

'I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars.' The monks rushed in astonishment and confusion from the chamber." *J. A. Wylie, in "The History of Protestantism."*

Verse 17. *I shall not die*, not absolutely, for see Ps 89:48; Heb 9:27; but not in the midst of my days, Ps 103:24; nor according to the will of mine enemies, who *"thrust at me that I might fall,"* Ps 118:13. But, on the contrary, I shall live, not simply as he had hitherto lived, in the greatest distress, which would be a wretched life, a living death: but lively, joyous, happy. Of this, he says he is secure; this the word asserts. On what foundation does he rest? Ps 118:14-15, *"Because God had become his salvation,"* and *"the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."* *Jacob Alting.*

Verse 17. *And declare the works of the LORD.* Matter of praise abounds in all the divine works, both of the general creation and preservation and of the redemption of our souls: chiefly, that God, besides the life of nature, has given to us the life of grace, without which we could not properly praise God and declare his works. *Rivetus.*

Verse 17. *And declare the works of the LORD.* In the second member of the verse, he points out the proper use of life. God does not prolong the lives of his people, that they may pamper themselves with meat and drink, sleep as much as they please, and enjoy every temporal blessing; but to magnify him for his benefits which he is daily heaping upon them. *John Calvin.*

Verse 17. According to Matthesius, Luther had this verse written against his study wall.

Verse 18. *The LORD hath chastened me sore.* Strong humours require strong physic to purge them out. Where corruption is deeply rooted in the heart, a light or small matter will not serve the turn to work it out. No; but a great deal of stir and ado must be made with it. *Thomas Horton.*

Verse 18. *But he hath not given me over unto death.* It might have been worse, may the afflicted saint say, and it will yet be better; it is in mercy and in measure that God chastiseth his children. It is his care that "the spirit fail not before him, nor the souls which he hath made," Isa 57:16. If his child swoons in the whipping, God lets fall the rod, and falls a kissing it, to fetch life into it again. *John Trapp.*

Verse 19. *Open to me the gates of righteousness.* The gates won by his righteousness, to whom we daily say, "Thou only art holy"; the gates which needed the "Via Dolorosa and the cross, before they could roll back on their hinges. On a certain stormy afternoon, after the sun had been for three hours darkened, the world again heard of that Eden from which, four thousand years before, Adam had been banished. "Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." O blessed malefactor, who thus entered into the heavenly gardens! O happy thief, that thus stole the kingdom of heaven! And see how valiantly he now enters it. *"Open to me the gates of righteousness.* Not "God be merciful to me a sinner"; not "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." But this is what is called the suppliant; omnipotence of prayer. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." *John Mason Neale.*

Verse 21. *I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me.* There is a point which we would especially notice, and that is, praise for *hearing prayer*. In this point, almost above all others, God is frequently robbed of his praise. Men pray; they receive an answer to their prayers; and then forget to praise. This happens especially in small things; we should ever remember that whatever is worth praying for, is worth praising for also. The fact is, we do not recognize God in these small things as much as we should; if we do praise, it is for the receipt of the blessing, with which we are pleased, leaving out of account the One from whom the blessing has come. This is not acceptable to God; we must see him in the blessing, if we would really praise. The Psalmist says, "*I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me*"; he praised not only because he had *received*, but also because he had been *heard*—because the living God, as a hearing God, was manifested in his mercies. And when we know that God has heard us, let us not delay our praise; if we put off our thanksgiving until perhaps only the evening, we may forget to praise at all; and if we do praise, it will in all probability be with only half the warmth which would animate our song at first. God loves a quick return for his blessings; one sentence of heartfelt thanksgiving is worth all the formalism of a more laboured service. There is a freshness about immediate praise which is like the bloom upon the fruit; its being spontaneous adds ineffably to its price. Trace, then, dear reader, a connection between your God and your blessing. Recognize his hearing ear as well as his bounteous hand, and be yours the Psalmist's words, *I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me.* Philip Bennet Power.

Verse 22. *The stone. The head stone of the corner.* Christ Jesus is a stone: no firmness, but in him. A fundamental stone: no building, but on him. A corner stone: no piecing nor reconciliation, but in him. James Ford, 1856.

Verse 22. *The stone which the builders rejected, etc.* To apply it to Christ, "*The Stone*" is the ground of all. Two things befall it; two things as contrary as may be,—1. *Refused*, cast away; then, called for again, and *made head of the building*. So, two parts there are to the eye. 1. The *refusing*; 2. The *raising*; which are his two estates, his *humiliation*, and his *exaltation*. In either of these you may observe two degrees, a *quibus*, and *quosque*, by whom and how far. *By whom refused?* We weigh the word, *aeificantes*: not by men unskilful, but by workmen, professed *builders*; it is so much the worse. *How far?* We weigh the word,—*reprobaverunt; usque ad reprobari*, even to a reprobation. It is not *improbaverunt, disliked*, as not fit for some eminent place; but *reprobaverunt, utterly reprobate*, for any place at all. Again, *exalted*, by whom? The next words are *a Domino*, by God, as good a *builder*, nay, better than the best of them; which makes amends for the former. And *How far?* Placed by him, not in any part of the *building*; but in the part most in the eye (*the corner*), and in the highest place of it, *the very head*. So, *rejected*, and that by the *builders*, and *to the lowest estate*: and from the *lowest estate exalted in caput anguli*, to the chiefest place of all; and that by God himself. Lancelot Andrewes.

Verse 22. *The stone which the builders refused, etc.* We need not wonder, that not only the powers of the world are usually enemies to Christ, and that the contrivers of policies, those builders, leave out Christ in their building, but that the pretended builders of the church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the Scriptures, amongst those that are haters of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience, and saving faith, that teach men to esteem Christ, and build upon him. The vanity and folly of these builders' opinion appears in this, that they are overpowered by the great Architect of the church: his purpose stands. Notwithstanding their rejection of Christ, he is still made the head corner stone. They cast him away by their reproaches, and by giving him up to be crucified and then cast into the grave, causing a stone to be rolled upon this *stone* which they had so rejected, that it might appear no more, and so thought themselves sure. But even from thence did he arise, and *became the head of the corner.* *Robert Leighton.*

Verse 22. *The stone which the builders refused, etc.* That is to say, God sent a living, precious, chosen stone on earth; but the Jews, who then had the building of the church, rejected that stone, and said of it, "This man, who observeth not the Sabbath, is not of God and, "We have no king but Caesar, "and, That seducer said, I will rise after three days"; and many similar things beside. But this stone, so rejected by the builders as unfit for raising the spiritual edifice, *is become the head of the corner,* has been made by God, the principal architect, the bond to connect the two walls and keep them together; that is to say, has been made the head of the whole church, composed of Jews and Gentiles; and such a head, that whoever is not under him cannot be saved; and whoever is built under him, the living stone, will certainly be saved. Now all this *is the Lord's doing,* done by his election and design, without any intervention on the part of man, and therefore, *it is wonderful in our eyes.* For who is there that must not look upon it as a wonderful thing, to find a man crucified, dead and buried, rising, after three days, from the dead, immortal, with unbounded power, and declared Prince of men and angels, and a way opened through him for mortal man, to the kingdom of heaven, to the society of the angels, to a happy immortality? *Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 22. *The stone which the builders refused.* Here we behold with how strong and impregnable a shield the Holy Ghost furnishes us against the empty vaunting of the Papal clergy. Be it so, that they possess the name, "chief builders"; but if they disown Christ, does it necessarily follow that we must disown him also? Let us rather contemn and trample under our feet all their decrees, and let us reverence this precious stone upon which our salvation rests. By the expression, *is become the head of the corner,* we are to understand the real foundation of the church, which sustains the whole weight of the edifice; it being requisite that the corners should form the main strength of buildings. *John Calvin.*

Verse 22. *The stone*, etc. That is, I, whom the great men and rulers of the people rejected (1Sa 26:19), as the builders of a house reject a stone unfit to be employed in it, am now become king over Israel and Judah; and a type of that glorious King who shall hereafter be in like manner refused (Lu 19:14 Lu 20:17), and then be by God exalted to be Lord of all the world, and the foundation of all men's happiness. *Thomas Fellton.*

Verse 22. *The stone.* The author of *Historia Scholastica* mentions it as a tradition that at the building of the second temple there was a particular *stone* of which that was literally true, which is here parabolically rehearsed, viz., that it had the hap to be often taken up by the builders, and as oft rejected, and at last was found to be perfectly fit for the most honourable place, that of the chief cornerstone, which coupled the sides of the walls together, the extraordinariness whereof occasioned the speech here following: *This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.* *Henry Hammond.*

Verse 22. *The head stone of the corner.* How of the "*corner*"? The *corner* is the place where two walls meet: and there be many twos in this *building*: the two walls of nations. *Jews* and *Gentiles*; the two of conditions, *bond* and *free*; the two of sex, *male* and *female*: the great two (which this *Easter* day we celebrate) of the *quick* and the *dead*; above all, the greatest two of all, *heaven* and *earth.* *Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 22. *Is become the head stone of the corner.*

Higher yet and ever higher, passeth he those ranks above,
Where the seraphs are enkindled with the flame of endless love;
Passeth them, for not even seraphs ever loved so well as he
Who hath borne for his beloved, stripes, and thorns, and shameful tree;
Ever further, ever onward, where no angel's foot may tread,
Where the twenty-four elders prostrate fall in mystic dread:
Where the four strange living creatures sing their hymn before the throne,
The Despised One and rejected passeth, in his might alone;
Passeth through the dazzling rainbow, till upon the father's right
He is seated, his Co-Equal, God of God, anti Light of Light.

—*R. F. Littledale.*

Verse 22. *Head stone of the corner.* It is now clear to all by divine grace whom Holy Scripture calls the cornerstone. Him in truth who, taking unto himself from one side the Jewish, and from the other the Gentile people, unites, as it were, two walls in the one fabric of the Church; them of whom it is written, "He hath made both one"; who exhibited himself as the Cornerstone, not only in things below, but in things above, because he united on earth the nations of the Gentiles to the people of Israel, and both together to angels. For at his birth the angels exclaimed, "On earth peace, good will toward

men." Gregory, quoted by Henry Newland, 1860.

Verse 22. *The corner.* By Bede it is rendered as a reason why the Jewish builders refused our Saviour Christ for the *head* place, *Quia in uno pariete, stare amabant.* They could endure no *corner*; they must stand alone upon their own single wall; be of themselves, not join with Gentiles or Samaritans. And Christ they endured not, because they thought if he had been *heard* he would have inclined that way. *Alias oves oportet me adducere* (Joh 10:16). *Alias* they could not abide. But sure, a purpose there must be, *alias oves adducendi*, of bringing in others, of joining a *corner*, or else we do not *facere secundum exemplar*, build not according to Christ's pattern; our fashion of fabric is not like his. Lancelot Andrewes.

Verse 22-27. By the consent of all expositors, in this Psalm is typed the coming of Christ, and his kingdom of the gospel. This is manifested by an *exaltation*, by an *exultation*, by a *petition*, by a *benediction*. The *exaltation*: Ps 118:22, *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.* The Jews refused this stone, but God hath built his church upon it.

The *exultation*: Ps 118:24, *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.* A more blessed day than that day was wherein he made man, when he had done making the world; "*Rejoice we, and be glad in it.*"

The *petition*: Ps 118:25, *Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.* Thy justice would not suffer thee to save without the Messiah; he is come, "*Save now, O LORD, I beseech thee.*" Our Saviour is come, let mercy and salvation come along with him.

The *benediction* makes all clear: Ps 118:26, *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD.* For what David here prophesied, the people after accomplished: Mt 21:9, "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" The corollary or sum is in my text: Ps 118:27, *God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* Thomas Adams.

Verse 24. *This is the day which the LORD hath made.* 1. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath: "*it is the day which the Lord hath made,*" has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2. The duty of the Sabbath, "*we will rejoice and be glad in it*"; not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming "*the head of the corner.*" This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy. Matthew Henry.

Verse 24. *This is the day,* etc. The "queen of days," as the Jews call the Sabbath. Arnobius interprets this text of the Christian Sabbath; others, of the day of salvation by Christ exalted to be the head cornerstone; in opposition to that dismal day of man's fall. John Trapp.

Verse 24. Because believers have ever cause for comfort, therefore they are commanded always to rejoice, Php 3:1 4:4. Whether their sins or sufferings come into their hearts, they must not sorrow as they that have no hope. In their saddest conditions, they have the Spirit of consolation. There is seed of joy sown within them when it is turned under the clods, and appears not above ground. But there are special times when God calls for this grain to spring up. They have some red letters, some holy days in the calendar of their lives, wherein this joy, as wine at a wedding, is most seasonable; but among all those days it never relishes so well, it never tasteth so pleasantly, as on a Lord's day. Joy suits no person so much as a saint, and it becomes no season so well as a Sabbath. Joy in God on other days is like the birds chirping in winter, which is pleasing; but joy on the Lord's day is like their warbling times and pretty notes in spring, when all other things look with a suitable delightful aspect. *This is the day which the LORD hath made*, (he that made all days, so especially this day, but what follows?) *we will rejoice and be glad in it*. In which words we have the church's solace, or joy, and the season, or day of it. Her solace was great: "*We will rejoice and be glad.*" Those expressions are not needless repetitions, but shew the exuberance or high degree of their joy. The season of it: "*This is the day which the LORD hath made.*" Compare this place with Mt 11:22-23, and Ac 4:11, and you will find that the precedent verses are a prophetic prediction of Christ's resurrection, and so this verse foretells the church's joy upon that memorable and glorious day. And, indeed, if "a feast be made for laughter," Ec 10:19, then that day wherein Christ feasts his saints with the choicest mercies may well command their greatest spiritual mirth. A thanksgiving day hath a double precedence of a fast day. On a fast day we eye God's anger; on a thanksgiving day we look to God's favour. In the former we specially mind our corruptions; in the latter, God's compassions;—therefore a fast day calls for sorrow, a thanksgiving day for joy. But the Lord's day is the highest thanksgiving day, and deserveth much more than the Jewish Purim, to be a day of feasting and gladness, and a good day. *George Spinnock.*

Verse 24. *Day which the LORD hath made.* As the sun in heaven makes the natural day by his light, so does Christ the Sun of Righteousness make ours a spiritual day. *Starke.*

Verse 24. *Day which the LORD hath made.* Adam introduced a day of sadness, but another day is made by Christ: Abraham saw his day from afar, and was glad; we will walk even now in his light. *Johann David Friesch, 1731.*

Verse 25. *Save.* With the Hebrews salvation is a wide word, comprising all the favours of God that may lead to preservation; and therefore the Psalmist elsewhere extends this act both to man and beast, and, as if he would comment upon himself, expounds swson save, by euodwson? It is so dear a title of God, that the prophet cannot have enough of it. *Joseph Hall.*

Verse 25. *Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD.* Let him have the acclamations of the people as is usual at the inauguration of a prince; let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy, "*Save now, I*

beseech thee, O LORD." This is like *vivat rex*, and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, "*Save now, I beseech thee.*" Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this Saviour be my Saviour; and in order to that my Ruler: let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings. Ps 72:3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart, conquering and to conquer. *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 25. *Save now*, or, *hosanna*. Our thanksgivings on earth must always be accompanied with prayers for further mercies, and the continuance of our prosperity; Our hallelujahs with hosannas. *Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 25. *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord*, etc. Hosanna. The cry of the multitudes as they thronged in our Lord's triumphal procession into Jerusalem (Mt 21:9,18 Mr 11:9,15 Joh 12:13) was taken from this Psalm, from which they were accustomed to recite Ps 118:25-26 at the Feast of Tabernacles. On that occasion the great Hallel, consisting of Psalms 113-118 was chanted by one of the priests, and at certain intervals the multitudes joined in the responses, waving their branches of willow and palm, and shouting as they waved them, Hallelujah, or *Hosannah*, or, "*O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.*" This was done at the recitation of Ps 118:1,29; but according to the school of Hillel, at the words "*Save now, we beseech thee.*" The school of Shammai, on the contrary, say it was at the words, "*Send now prosperity.*" Rabban Gamaliel and R. Joshua were observed by R. Akiba to wave their branches only at the words, "*Save now, we beseech thee*" (Mishna, *Succah*, 3. 9). On each of the seven days during which the feast lasted the people thronged the court of the temple, and went in procession about the altar, setting their boughs bending towards it; the trumpets sounding as they shouted *Hosannah*. But on the seventh day they marched seven times round the altar, shouting meanwhile the great Hosannah to the sound of the trumpets of the Levites (Lightfoot, *Temple Service*, 16. 2). The very children who could wave the palm branches were expected to take part in the solemnity (Mishna, *Succah*, 3. 15; Mt 21:15). From the custom of waving the boughs of myrtle and willow during the service the name Hosannah was ultimately transferred to the boughs themselves, so that according to Elias Levita (*Thisbi. sv*), "the bundles of the willows of the brook which they carry at the Feast of Tabernacles are called Hosannahs." *William Aldis Wright, in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,"* 1863.

Verse 25. *Send now prosperity*, .God will send it, but his people must pray for it. "I came for thy prayers," Da 10:12. *John Trapp.*

Verse 26. *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD.* The difference between Christ and

Antichrist is to be noticed, because Christ did not come in his own name, but in the name of the Father; of which he himself testified, Joh 5:43, "*I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*" Thus all faithful ministers of the Church must not come in their own name, or the name of Baal, or of Mammon and their own belly, but in the name of God, with a lawful call; concerning which see Heb 5:1-14 Re 10:1-11 15:1-8. *Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 27. *God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light.* The Psalmist was clearly possessed of light, for he says, "*God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.*" He was evidently, then, possessed of light; and this light was in him as "the light of life." This light had shone into his heart; the rays and beams of divine truth had penetrated into his conscience. He carried about with him a light which had come from God; in this light he saw light, and in this light he discerned everything which the light manifested. Thus by this internal light he knew what was good and what was evil, what was Sweet and what was bitter, what was true and what was false, what was spiritual and what was natural. He did not say, This light came from creature exertion, this light was the produce of my own wisdom, this light was nature transmuted some action of my own will, and thus gradually rose into existence from long time and assiduous cultivation. But he ascribes the whole of that light which he possessed unto God the Lord, as the sole author and the only giver of it. Now, if God the Lord has ever showed you and me the same light which he showed his servant of old, we carry about with us more or less of a solemn conviction that we have received this light from him. There will, indeed, be many clouds of darkness to cover it; there will often be doubts and fears, hovering like mists and fogs over our souls, whether the light which we have received be from God or not. But in solemn moments when the Lord is pleased a little to revive his work; at times and seasons when he condescends to draw forth the affections of our hearts unto himself, to bring us into his presence, to hide us in some measure in the hollow of his hand, and give us access unto himself, at such moments and seasons we carry about with us, in spite of all our unbelief, in spite of all the suggestions of the enemy, in spite of all doubts and fears and suspicions that rise from the depths of the carnal mind, in spite of all these counter workings and undermining, we carry about with us at these times a solemn conviction that we have light, and that this light we have received from God. And why so? Because we can look back to a time when we walked in no such light, when we felt no such light, when everything spiritual and heavenly was dark to us, and we were dark to them.

Those things which the Spirit of God enables a man to do, are in Scripture sometimes called *sacrifices*. "That we may offer," we read, "spiritual *sacrifices* acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." The apostle speaks of "receiving of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from the brethren at Philippi; an odour of a sweet smell; a *sacrifice* acceptable and well pleasing to God." Php 4:18. So he says to the Hebrew church: "But to do good and to communicate (that is, to the wants of God's people),

forget not; for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased." Heb 13:16. Well, then, these spiritual sacrifices which a man offers unto God are bound also to *the horns of the altar*. They are not well pleasing in the sight of God, except they are bound to the horns of the altar, so as to derive all their acceptance from the altar. Our prayers are only acceptable to God as they are offered through the cross of Jesus. Our praises and thanksgivings are only acceptable to God as they are connected with the cross of Christ, and ascend to the Father through the propitiation of his dear Son. The ordinances of God's house are only acceptable to God as spiritual sacrifices, when they are bound to the horns of the altar. Both the ordinances of the New Testament—baptism and the Lord's supper—have been bound by the hands of God himself to the horns of the altar; and no one either rightly went through the one, or rightly received the other, who had not been first spiritually bound by the same hand to the horns of the altar. Every act of liberality, every cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, every feeling of sympathy and affection, every kind word, every compassionate action, shown to a brother; all and each are only acceptable to God as they ascend to him through the mediation of his dear Son. And, therefore, every sacrifice of our own comfort, or of our own advantage, of our own time, or of our own money, for the profit of God's children, is only a spiritual and acceptable sacrifice so far as it is bound to the horns of the altar, linked on to the cross of Jesus, and deriving all its fragrance and odour from its connection with the incense there offered by the Lord of life and glory. *J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 27. How comfortable is the light! It is so comfortable that light and comfort are often put for the same thing: *God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light*, that is, the light of counsel what to do, and the light of comfort in what we do, or after all our sufferings. Light is not only a candle held to us, to do our work by, but it comforts and cheereth us in our work. Ec 11:7. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 27. *Shewed us light: bind the sacrifice.* Here is somewhat received; somewhat to be returned. God hath blessed us, and we must bless God. His grace, and our gratitude, are the two lines my discourse must run upon. They are met in my text; let them as happily meet in your hearts, and they shall not leave you till they bring you to heaven. *Thomas Adams.*

Verse 27. *Bind the sacrifice with cords, etc.* The sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but "living sacrifices" (Ro 12:1) to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound "with cords to the horns of the altar." *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 27. *Bind the sacrifice, etc.* It is a saying among the Hebrews, that the beasts that were offered in sacrifice, they were the most struggling beasts of all the rest; such is the nature of us unthankful beasts, when we should love God again, we are readier to run away from him; we must be tied to the altar with cords, to draw from us love or fear. *Abraham Wright.*

Verse 27. *With cords.* This word is sometimes used for thick *twisted cords*, Jud 15:13; sometimes for *thick branches* of trees, used at some feasts, Eze 19:11 Le 23:40. Hereupon this sentence may two

ways be read; *bind the feast with thick branches*, or, *bind the sacrifice with cords*; both mean one thing, that men should keep the festivity with joy and thanks to God, as Israel did at their solemnities.

Henry Ainsworth.

Verse 27. *Even unto the horns of the altar.* Before these words must be understood, *lead it*: for the victims were bound to rings fixed in the floor. "*The horns*" were architectural ornaments, a kind of capitals, made of iron or of brass, somewhat in the form of the curved horns of an animal, projecting from the four angles of the altar. The officiating priest, when he prayed, placed his hands on them, and sometimes sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice: compare Ex 30:3 Le 4:7,18. At the end of this verse the word *saying* must be supplied. *Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 27. *Unto the horns.* That is, all the court over, until you come even to the horns of the altar, intending hereby many sacrifices or boughs. *Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 28. *God.* The original for "God" gives force to this passage: Them art my "*El*"—The Mighty One; therefore will I praise thee: my "*Eloah*"—a varied form with substantially the same sense, "and I will extol thee"—lift thee high in glory and honour. *Henry Cowles.*

Verse 28. This "extolling the Lord" will accomplish one of the great ends of praise, viz., his exaltation. It is true that God both can and will exalt himself, but it is at once the duty and the privilege of his people to exalt him. His name should be borne up and magnified by them; the glory of that name is now, as it were, committed to them: what use are we making of the opportunity and the privilege? *Philip Bennet Power.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 1-4.

1. The subject of songs "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good."
2. The chorus—"His mercy endureth for ever."
3. The choir—"Let Israel now say, "etc.;" "Let the house of Aaron, "etc.;" "Let them that fear the Lord, "etc."
4. The rehearsal—"Let them *now* say, "that they may be better prepared for universal praise hereafter."

Verse 5.

1. The season for prayer—"in distress."
2. The answer in season—"The Lord answered me."
3. The answer beyond the request—"And set me, "etc."

Verse 6.

1. When may a man know that God is on his side?
2. What confidence may that man enjoy who is assured of divine aid?

Verse 7.

1. The value of true friends.
2. The greater value of help from above.

Verses 8-9. Better. It is wiser, surer, morally more right, more ennobling, more happy in result.

Verse 10. Take a wide range and consider what has been done, should be done, and may be done "in the name of the Lord."

Verse 12.

1. Faith's innumerable annoyances.
2. Their speedy end.
3. Faith's complete victory.

Verse 13.

1. Our great antagonist.
2. His fierce attacks.
3. His evident object: "that I might fall."
4. His failure: "but the Lord helped me."

Verse 14.

1. Strength under affliction.
2. Song in hope of deliverance.
3. Salvation, or actual escape out of trial.

Verse 15. The joy of Christian households. It is joy in salvation: it is expressed,—"The voice": it abides: "the voice *is*": it is joy in the protection and honour given by the Lord's right hand.

Verse 15-16.

1. True joy is peculiar *to* the righteous.
2. *In* their tabernacles: in their pilgrimage state.
3. *For* salvation: rejoicing and salvation go together.
4. *From* God: "the right hand, "etc.: three right hands; both the salvation and the joy are from the hand of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; the right hand of each doeth valiantly. *G. R.*

Verse 17.

1. Good men are often in special danger: Joseph in the pit; Moses in the ark of bulrushes; Job on the dunghill; David's narrow escapes from the hand of Saul; Paul let down in a basket; what a fruit basket was that! How much was suspended upon that cord! The salvation of how many!
2. Good men have often a presentiment of their recovery from special danger: "I shall not die, but live."
3. Good men have a special desire for the preservation of their lives: "live and declare the works of the Lord." *G. R.*

Verses 17, 19, 22. The victory of the risen Saviour and its far reaching consequences:

- (1) Death is vanquished;
- (2) the gates of righteousness are opened;
- (3) the cornerstone of the church is laid.

—*Deichert, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 18.

1. The afflictions of the people of God are chastisements: "The Lord hath chastened me."
2. Those chastisements are often severe: hath chastened me *sore*.
3. The severity is limited: "it is not unto death." *G. R.*

Verse 19.

1. Access to God desired.
2. Humbly requested: "Open to me."
3. Boldly accepted: "I will go into them."
4. Gratefully enjoyed: "And praise the Lord."

Verse 22. In these words we may notice the following particulars.

1. The metaphorical view in which the church is here represented, namely, that of a *house* or *building*.
2. The character that our Immanuel bears with respect to this building; he is *the stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no house for God to dwell in among the children of men.
3. The character of the workmen employed in this spiritual structure; they are called *builders*.
4. A fatal error they are charged with in building the house of God; they *refuse* the stone of God's choosing; they do not allow him a place in his own house.
5. Notice the place that Christ should and shall have in this building, let the builders do their worst: he *is made the head stone of the corner*. The words immediately following declare how this is effected, and how the saints are affected with the news of his exaltation, notwithstanding the malice of hell and earth: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes." *Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verses 22-23.

1. The mystery stated. (a) That which is least esteemed by men as a means of salvation is most esteemed by God. (b) That which is most esteemed by God when made known is least esteemed by man.
2. The mystery explained. The way of salvation is the Lord's doing, therefore marvellous in our eyes.—*G.R.*

Verses 22-25.

1. Christ rejected.

2. Christ exalted.
3. His exaltation is due to God alone.
4. His exaltation commences a new era.
5. His exaltation suggests a new prayer.

—See Spurgeon's Sermon, no. 1,420.

Verse 24.

1. What is spoken of.
 - (a) The gospel day.
 - (b) The sabbath day.
2. What is said of it.
 - (a) It is given by God.
 - (b) To be joyfully received by man.—*G.R.*

Verse 25. What is church prosperity? Whence must it come? How can we obtain it?

Verse 25.

1. The object of the prayer.
 - (a) Salvation from sin.
 - (b) Prosperity in righteousness.
2. The earnestness of the prayer: "I beseech thee, I beseech thee".
3. The urgency of the prayer, "now—now"—now that the gates of righteousness are open, now that the foundation stone is laid, now that the gospel day has come—now, Lord! now!—*G.R.*

Verse 27. *Bind the sacrifice*, etc. Devotion is the mother, and she hath four daughters.

1. Constancy: "Bind the sacrifice."
2. Fervency: Bind it "with cords."
3. Wisdom: Bind it "to the altar."
4. Confidence: Even to the "horns" of the altar.

—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 27. *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, etc.

1. What is the sacrifice? Our whole selves, every talent, all our time, property, position, mind, heart, temper, life to the last.
2. Why does it need binding? It is naturally restive. Long delay, temptations, wealth, rank, discouragement, scepticism, all tend to drive it from the altar.
3. To what is it bound? To the doctrine of atonement. To Jesus and his work. To Jesus and our work.
4. What are the cords? Our own vows. The need of souls. Our joy in the work. The great reward. The love of Christ working upon us by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 28.

1. The gladdest fact in all the world: "Thou art my God."
2. The fittest spirit in which to enjoy it: "Praise thee"

Verse 28.

1. The effect of Christ being sacrificed for us: "Thou art my God."
2. The effect of our being offered as an acceptable sacrifice to him: "I will praise thee, I will exalt thee." Or,
 - (a) The covenant blessing: "Thou art my God."
 - (b) The covenant obligation: "I will praise thee."—*G.R.*

Verse 29.

1. The beginning and the end of salvation is mercy.
2. The beginning and end of its requirements is thanksgiving.—*G.R.*

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH PSALM

In "The Works of John Boys," 1626, folio, pp. 861-870, there is an exposition of this psalm.

Psalm 119 (Verse 1 to Verse 24)

PREFACE.

At length I am able to present to the Christian public another part of "The Treasury of David." It has demanded longer labour than its predecessors, but that labour has been freely given to it; and to the utmost of my ability I have kept the volume up to the level of those which have gone before. In the production of this exposition I had far rather be long than lax; for I know by experience the disappointment which comes to readers when, after a promising beginning, they see a serious declension towards the end. The general acceptance given to this Commentary has placed me under a heavy obligation to do my best even to the end. Towards that end I am still proceeding with all possible diligence, and it is with great pleasure that I look forward to the speedy issue of the seventh and last volume of the work. Many labours distract me from this favourite employment, but I hope to press on with more speed than of late, if my life be spared. It would be imprudent to make too sure of that, for the most fragile Venice glass is not more brittle than human life:

"The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to the tender film
Which holds our soul in life."

I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I

could see no bound, and this alone created a feeling of dismay. Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task, although the fear has not been realized. This marvellous poem seemed to me a great sea of holy teaching, moving, in its many verses, wave upon wave; altogether without an island of special and remarkable statement to break it up. I confess I hesitated to launch upon it. Other psalms have been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean. It is a continent of sacred thought, every inch of which is fertile as the garden of the Lord: it is an amazing level of abundance, a mighty stretch of harvest fields. I have now crossed the great plain for myself, but not without persevering, and, I will add, pleasurable, toil. Several great authors have traversed this region and left their tracks behind them, and so far the journey has been all the easier for me; but yet to me and to my helpers it has been no mean feat of patient authorship and research. This great Psalm is a book in itself: instead of being one among many psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye. Its depth is as great as its length; it is mystery, not set forth as mystery, but concealed beneath the simplest statements; may I say that it is experience allowed to prattle, to preach, to praise, and to pray like a child prophet in his own father's house?

My venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has been spared to help me with his admirable suggestions; but Mr. Gibson, who so industriously translated from the Latin authors, has fallen asleep, leaving behind him copious notes upon the rest of the psalms. Aid in the homiletical department has been given me by several of the ministers who were educated at the Pastors' College, and their names are duly appended to the hints and skeletons which they have supplied. In this department the present volume is believed to be superior to the former ones. May it prove to be really useful to my brethren, and my desire is fulfilled. I know so well the use of a homiletic hint when the mind is in search for a subject that I have felt peculiar pleasure in supplying my readers with a full measure of such helps.

In hunting up rare authors, and making extracts from them, Mr. Keys has rendered me great assistance, and I am also a debtor to others who have cheerfully rendered me service when I have sought it. Burdened with the care of many institutions, and the oversight of a singularly large church, I cannot do such justice to my theme as I could wish. Learned leisure would be far more accurate than my busy pen can ever hope to be. If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of nothing else, and undivided energies could have accomplished what spare strength can never perform. Hence, I am glad of help; so glad, that I am happy to acknowledge it. Not in this thing only, but in all other labours, I owe in the first place all to God, and secondarily, very, very much to those generous friends who find a delight in making my efforts successful.

Above all, I trust that the Holy Spirit has been with me in writing and compiling these volumes, and

therefore I expect that he will bless them both to the conversion of the unrenewed and to the edification of believers. The writing of this book has been a means of grace to my own heart; I have enjoyed for myself what I have prepared for my readers. The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting upon its contents I have seemed to eat angels' food. It is no wonder that old writers should call it, -- the school of patience, the soul's soliloquies, the little Bible, the anatomy of conscience, the rose garden, the pearl island, and the like. It is the Paradise of devotion, the Holy Land of poesy, the heart of Scripture, the map of experience, and the tongue of saints. It is the spokesman of feelings which else had found no utterance. Does it not say just what we wished to say? Are not its prayers and praises exactly such as our hearts delight in? No man needs better company than the Psalms; therein he may read and commune with friends human and divine; friends who know the heart of man towards God, and the heart of God towards man; friends who perfectly sympathize with us and our sorrows, friends who never betray or forsake. Oh, to be shut up in a cave with David, with no other occupation but to hear him sing, and to sing with him! Well might a Christian monarch lay aside his crown for such enjoyment, and a believing pauper find a crown in such felicity. It is to be feared that the Psalms are by no means so prized as in earlier ages of the Church. Time was when the Psalms were not only rehearsed in all the churches from day to day, but they were so universally sung that the common people knew them, even if they did not know the letters in which they were written. Time was when bishops would ordain no man to the ministry unless he knew "David" from end to end, and could repeat each psalm correctly; even Councils of the Church have decreed that none should hold ecclesiastical office unless they knew the whole psalter by heart. Other practices of those ages had better be forgotten, but to this memory accords an honourable record. Then, as Jerome tells us, the labourer, while he held the plough, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David. He tells us that in his part of the world, psalms were the Christian's ballads; could they have had better? They were the love songs of the people of God; could any others be so pure and heavenly? These sacred hymns express all modes of holy feeling; they are fit both for childhood and old age: they furnish maxims for the entrance of life, and serve as watchwords at the gates of death. The battle of life, the repose of the Sabbath, the ward of the hospital, the guest chamber of the mansion, the church, the oratory, yea, even heaven itself may be entered with psalms.

My next portion will continue the Pilgrim Psalms, of which we have five in the present volume. I have been sorry to make a break in these golden steps. I would rather have presented the glittering ascent as a whole, that all might see at a glance "the stairs of the City of David at the ascent of the wall;" but as the books must divide somewhere, and there was no more convenient place, I have been compelled to separate these Songs of the Steps, or "Songs on the high key", as Luther calls them. It

was impossible to cut the great psalm in two, and it is a far less evil to separate the members of a group. I hope the arrangement will not cause serious inconvenience to anyone; nor prevent the student's meditating upon each Song of Degrees, not only as it sparkles as a separate star, but as it shines in its own constellation.

Finally, when I reach the last psalm, it is my firm conviction that I shall find no truer closing words for myself than those of Bishop Horne, which I take liberty here to quote, using them as if they were my own, since they admirably express my present feelings and past experiences: --

"And now, could the author flatter himself that anyone would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly. Vanity and vexation flew for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Zion he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and they moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. The meditations are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

Reader,

I am,

Thine to serve,

for Christ's sake,

C.H. Spurgeon.

WESTWOOD, September, 1882.

PSALM 119 OVERVIEW

Title. There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is THE LONGEST PSALM, and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it. It equals in bulk twenty-two psalms of the average length of the Songs of Degrees. Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervour. It is like the celestial city which lieth four square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one

string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind. He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and is as weighty as it is bulky. Again and again have we cried while studying it, "Oh the depths!" Yet these depths are hidden beneath an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil of light, and hence only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look into it.

The Psalm is alphabetical. Eight stanzas commence with one letter, and then another eight with the next letter, and so the whole Psalm proceeds by octonaries quite through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Besides which, there are multitudes of appositions of sense, and others of those structural formalities with which the oriental mind is pleased, -- formalities very similar to those in which our older poets indulged. The Holy Spirit thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the memory. He is often plain or elegant in his manner, but he does not disdain to be quaint or formal if thereby his design of instruction can be the more surely reached. He does not despise even contracted and artificial modes of speech, if by their use he can fix his teaching upon the mind. Isaac Taylor has worthily set forth the lesson of this fact: -- "In the strictest sense this composition is conditioned; nevertheless in the highest sense is it an utterance of spiritual life; and in thus finding these seemingly opposed elements, intimated commingled as they are throughout this Psalm, a lesson full of meaning is silently conveyed to those who shall receive it -- that the conveyance of the things of God to the human spirit is in no way damaged or impeded, much less is it deflected or ciliated by its subjugation to loose modes of utterance which most of all bespeak their adaptation to the infancy and the childlike capacity of the recipient."

AUTHOR. The fashion among modern writers is, as far as possible, to take ever? Psalm from David. As the critics of this school are usually unsound in doctrine and unspiritual in tone, we gravitate in the opposite direction, from a natural suspicion of everything which comes from so unsatisfactory a

quarter. We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our teacher called it "David's pocket book", and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this Psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil". After long reading an author one gets to know his style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea, that it is altogether his own.

Subject. The one theme is the word of the Lord. The Psalmist sets his subject in many lights, and treats of it in divers ways, but he seldom omits to mention the word of the Lord in each verse under some one or other of the many names by which he knows it; and even if the name be not there, the subject is still heartily pursued in every stanza. He who wrote this wonderful song was saturated with those books of Scripture which he possessed. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple Christian in a farmhouse who had meditated the Bible through three times. This is precisely what this Psalmist had done, -- he had gone past reading into meditation. Like Luther, David had shaken every fruit tree in God's garden, and gathered golden fruit therefrom. "The most," says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is to be feared that we too often do the like. This is a miserable way of treating the pages of inspiration. May the Lord prevent us from repeating that sin while reading this priceless Psalm.

There is an evident growth in the subject matter. The earlier verses are of such a character as to lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. In every portion, however, it is the fruit of deep experience, careful observation, and earnest meditation. If David did not write in there must have lived another believer of exactly the same order of mind as David, and he must have addicted himself to Psalmody with equal ardour, and have been an equally hearty lover of Holy Writ.

Our best improvement of this sacred composition will come through getting our minds into intense sympathy with its subject. In order to this, we might do well to commit it to memory. Philip Henry's daughter wrote in her diary, "I have of late taken some pains to learn by heart Psalm 119, and have made some progress therein." She was a sensible, godly woman. Having done this, we should consider the fulness, certainty, clearness, and sweetness of the word of God, since by such reflections we are likely to be stirred up to a warm affection for it. What favoured beings are those to whom the Eternal God has written a letter in his own hand and style. What ardour of devotion, what diligence of composition can produce a worthy eulogium for the divine testimonies? If ever one such has fallen from the pen of man it is this 119th Psalm, which might well be called the holy soul's soliloquy before an open Bible.

This sacred ode is a little Bible, the Scriptures condensed, a mass of Bibline, Holy Writ rewritten in

holy emotions and actions. Blessed are they who can read and understand these saintly aphorisms; they shall find golden apples in this true Hesperides, and come to reckon that this Psalm, like the whole Scripture which it praises, is a pearl island, or, better still, a garden of sweet flowers.

NOTES RELATING TO THE PSALM AS A WHOLE

Eulogium upon the whole Psalm. -- This Psalm shines and shows itself among the rest,

Velut inter ignes

Luna minores. {1}

a star in the firmament of the Psalms, of the first and greatest magnitude. This will readily appear if you consider either the manner it is composed in, or the matter it is composed of. The manner it is composed in is very elegant. The matter it is composed of is very excellent.

1. The manner it is composed in is very elegant; full of art, rule, method theological matter in a logical manner, a spiritual alphabet framed and formed according to the Hebrew alphabet.
2. The matter it is composed of is very excellent; full of rare sublimities, deep mysteries, gracious activities, yea, glorious ecstasies. The Psalm is made up of three things, --
 - a. prayers,
 - b. praises,
 - c. protestations. Prayers to God; praises of God; protestations unto God. Rev. W. Simmons, in a sermon in the "Morning Exercises", 1661.

Eulogium. This Psalm is called the Alphabet of Divine Love, the Paradise of all the Doctrines, the Storehouse of the Holy Spirit, the School of Truth, also the deep mystery of the Scriptures, where the whole moral discipline of all the virtues shines brightly. And as all moral instruction is delightful, therefore this Psalm, because excelling in this kind of instruction, should be called delightful, inasmuch as it surpasses the rest. The other Psalms, truly, as lesser stars shine somewhat; but this burns with the meridian heat of its full brightness, and is wholly resplendent With moral loveliness. Johannes Paulus Palanterius, 1600.

Eulogium. In our German version it has the appropriate inscription, "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God." Franz Delitzsch, 1871.

Eulogium. It is recorded of the celebrated St. Augustine, who among his voluminous works left a Comment on the Book of Psalms, that he delayed to comment on this one till he had finished the whole Psalter; and then yielded only to the long and vehement urgency of his friends, "because", he says, "as often as I essayed to think thereon, it always exceeded the powers of my intent thought and the utmost grasp of my faculties". While one ancient father {2} entitles this Psalm "the perfection of teaching and instruction"; another {3} says that "it applies an all containing medicine to the varied spiritual diseases of men -- sufficing to perfect those who long for perfect virtue, to rouse the slothful, to refresh the dispirited, and to set in order the relaxed"; to which might be added many like

testimonies of ancient and modern commentators on it. William De Burgh, 1860.

Eulogium. In proportion as this Psalm seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener. Augustine, 354-480.

Eulogium. In Matthew Henry's "Account of the Life and Death of his father, Philip Henry," he says: "Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures." He often said, "All grace grows as love to the word of God grows."

{1} And like the moon, the feebler fires among, "Conspicuous shines." -- Horace.

{2} St. Hilary.

{3} Theodoret.

Eulogium. It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive -- the 119th Psalm -- has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God. John Ruskin, in "Fors Clavigera".

Eulogium. This Psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the Psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practise the sacred word. Moreover, this Psalm is in some sort a touchstone for the spiritual life of those who read it. The sentiments expressed in it perfectly harmonise with what the historical books and other Psalms teach concerning David's obedience and his zeal for God's glory. There are, however, within it words which breathe so elevated a piety, that they can have their full sense and perfect truthfulness only in the mouth of Him of whom the prophet king was the type. From the French of Armand de Mestral, 1856.

Eulogium. The 119th Psalm has been spoken of by a most distinguished living rationalistic critic (Professor Reuss) as "not poetry at all, but simply a litany -- a species of chaplet." Such does not seem to be the opinion of the angels of God, and of the redeemed spirits, when that very poem supplies With the language of praise -- the paean of victory, "Just and true are thy ways" ([Revelation 15:3](#)); the cry of the angel of the waters, "Thou art righteous, O Lord!" ([Revelation 16:5](#)); the voice of

much people in heaven, "True and righteous are his judgments" (Revelation 19:2); what is this but the exclamation of him, whoever he may have been, who wrote the Psalm -- "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Psalms 119:137). William Alexander, in "The Quiver", 1880.

Incident. In the midst of a London season; in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819; William Wilberforce writes in his Diary -- "Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort". William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms". 1877.

Incident. George Wishart, the chaplain and biographer of "the great Marquis of Montrose," as he was called, would have shared the fate of his illustrious patron but for the following singular expedient. When upon the scaffold, he availed himself of the custom of the times, which permitted the condemned to choose a Psalm to be sung. He selected the 119th Psalm, and before two thirds of the Psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and his life was preserved. It may not be out of place to add that the George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, above referred to, has been too often confounded with the godly martyr of the same name who lived and died a century previously. We only mention the incident because it has often been quoted as a singular instance of the providential escape of a saintly personage; whereas it was the very ingenious device of a person who, according to Woodrow, was more renowned for shrewdness than for sanctity. The length of this Psalm was sagaciously employed as the means of gaining time, and, happily, the expedient succeeded. C.H.S.

Alphabetical Arrangement. It is observed that the 119th Psalm is disposed according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to intimate that children, when they begin to learn their alphabet, should learn that Psalm. Nathanael Hardy, 1618-1670.

Alphabetical Arrangement. True it is that the verses indeed begin not either with the English or yet the Latin letters, but with the Hebrew, wherein David made and wrote this Psalm. The will and purpose of the Holy Ghost is to make us to feel and understand that the doctrine herein contained is not only set down for great clerks which have gone to school for ten or twenty years; but also for the most simple; to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance. From Calvin's Twenty-two Sermons upon the 119th Psalm, 1580.

Alphabetical Arrangement. There may be something more than fancy in the remark, that Christ's name, "the Alpha and Omega" -- equivalent to declaring him all that which every letter of the alphabet could express -- may have had a reference to the peculiarity of this Psalm, -- a Psalm in which (with the exception of Psalms 119:84,122, exceptions that make the rule more marked) every verse speaks of God's revelation of himself to man. Andrew A. Bonar, 1859.

Alphabetical Arrangement: Origen says it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom; and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection.

Alphabetical Arrangement. That the unlearned reader may understand what is meant by the Psalm

being alphabetical, we append the following specimen upon the section Aleph:

A blessing is on them that are undefiled in the way
and walk in the law of Jehovah;

A blessing is on them that keep his testimonies,
and seek him with their whole heart;

Also on them that do no wickedness,
but walk in his ways.

A law hast thou given unto us,
that we should diligently keep thy commandments.

Ah! Lord, that my ways were made so direct
that I might keep thy statutes!

And then shall I not be confounded.

While I have respect unto all thy commandments.

As for me, I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart,
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

An eye will I have unto thy ceremonies,

O forsake me not utterly. --From "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged By Four Friends". 1867.

EXPOSITION

Verse 2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies. What! A second blessing? Yes, they are doubly blessed whose outward life is supported by an inward zeal for God's glory. In the first verse we had an undefiled way, and it was taken for granted that the purity in the way was not mere surface work, but was attended by the inward truth and life which comes of divine grace. Here that which was implied is expressed. Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections. God's word is his witness or testimony to grand and important truths which concern himself and our relation to him: this we should desire to know; knowing it, we should believe it; believing it, we should love it; and loving it, we should hold it fast against all comers. There is a doctrinal keeping of the word when we are ready to die for its defence, and a practical keeping of it when we actually live under its power. Revealed truth is precious as diamonds, and should be kept or treasured up in the memory and in the heart as jewels in a casket, or as the law was kept in the ark; this however is not enough, for it is meant for practical use, and therefore it must be kept or followed, as men keep to a path, or to a line of business. If we

keep God's testimonies they will keep us; they will keep us right in opinion, comfortable in spirit, holy in conversation, and hopeful in expectation. If they were ever worth having, and no thoughtful person will question that, then they are worth keeping; their designed effect does not come through a temporary seizure of them, but by a persevering keeping of them: "in keeping of them there is great reward."

We are bound to keep with all care the word of God, because it is his testimonies. He gave them to us, but they are still his own. We are to keep them as a watchman guards his master's house, as a steward husbands his lord's goods, as a shepherd keeps his employer's flock. We shall have to give an account, for we are put in trust with the gospel, and woe to us if we be found unfaithful. We cannot fight a good fight, nor finish our course, unless we keep the faith. To this end the Lord must keep us: only those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation will ever be able to keep his testimonies. What a blessedness is therefore evidenced and testified by a careful belief in God's word, and a continual obedience thereunto. God has blessed them, is blessing them, and will bless them for ever. That blessedness which David saw in others he realized for himself, for in [Psalms 119:168](#) he says, "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies," and in Ps 119:54-56 he traces his joyful songs and happy memories to this same keeping of the law, and he confesses, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." Doctrines which we teach to others we should experience for ourselves.

And that seek him with the whole heart. Those who keep the Lord's testimonies are sure to seek after himself. If his word is precious we may be sure that he himself is still more so. Personal dealing with a personal God is the longing of all those who have allowed the word of the Lord to have its full effect upon them. If we once really know the power of the gospel we must seek the God of the gospel. "O that I knew where I might find HIM," will be our wholehearted cry. See the growth which these sentences indicate: first, in the way, then walking in it, then finding and keeping the treasure of truth, and to crown all, seeking after the Lord of the way himself. Note also that the further a soul advances in grace the more spiritual and divine are its longings: an outward walk does not content the gracious soul, nor even the treasured testimonies; it reaches out in due time after God himself, and when it in a measure finds him, still yearns for more of him, and seeks him still.

Seeking after God signifies a desire to commune with him more closely, to follow him more fully, to enter into more perfect union with his mind and will, to promote his glory, and to realize completely all that he is to holy hearts. The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox.

God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection. But the heart must not be divided with many objects if the Lord is to be sought by us. God is one, and we shall not know

him till our heart is one. A broken heart need not be distressed at this, for no heart is so whole in its seeking after God as a heart which is broken, whereof every fragment sighs and cries after the great Father's face. It is the divided heart which the doctrine of the text censures, and strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken. When our whole heart seeks the holy God in Christ Jesus it has come to him of whom it is written, "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole."

That which the Psalmist admires in this verse he claims in the tenth, where he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee." It is well when admiration of a virtue leads to the attainment of it. Those who do not believe in the blessedness of seeking the Lord will not be likely to arouse their hearts to the pursuit, but he who calls another blessed because of the grace which he sees in him is on the way to gaining the same grace for himself.

If those who seek the Lord are blessed, what shall be said of those who actually dwell with him and know that he is theirs?

"To those who fall, how kind thou art!

How good to those who seek I

But what to those who find? Ah! this

Nor tongue nor pen can show:

The love of Jesus -- what it is,

None but his loved ones know."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 2. *The doubling of the sentence*, Blessed... Blessed, in the first verse and second, is to let us see the certainty of the blessing belonging to the godly. The word of God is as true in itself when it is once spoken, as when it is many times repeated: the repetition of it is for confirmation of our weak faith. That which Isaac spake of Jacob, -- "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed," is the most sure decree of God upon all his children. Satan would fain curse Israel, by the mouth of such as Balaam was; but he shall not be able to curse, because God hath blessed. William Cowper.

Verse 2. *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies*, and that seek him with the whole heart. In the former verse a blessed man is described by the course of his actions, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way": in this verse he is described by the frame of his heart. Thomas Manton.

Verse 2. *Keep his testimonies*. The careful keeping in mind of God's testimonies is blessedness; for though there is a keeping of them in conversation mentioned in the former verse, here another thing is intimated diverse from the former; he that keepeth this plant or holy seed so that the devil cannot take it out of his heart, he is happy. The word here used signifieth such a careful custody as that is wherewith we use to keep tender plants. Paul Bayne.

Verse 2. Testimonies. The notion by which the word of God is expressed is "testimonies"; whereby is intended the whole declaration of God's will in doctrines, commands, examples, threatenings, promises. The whole word is the testimony which God hath deposed for the satisfaction of the world about the way of their salvation. Now because the word of God branches itself into two parts, the law and the gospel, this notion may be applied to both. First, to the law, in regard whereof the ark was called "the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 25:16), because the two tables were laid up in it. The gospel is also called the testimony, "the testimony of God concerning his Son." "To the law, and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20); where testimony seems to be distinguished from the law. The gospel is so called, because therein God hath testified how a man shall be pardoned, reconciled to God, and obtain a right to eternal life. We need a testimony in this case, because it is more unknown to us. The law was written upon the heart, but the gospel is a stranger. Natural light will discern something of the law, and pry into matters which are of a moral strain and concernment; but evangelical truths are a mystery, and depend upon the mere testimony of God concerning his Son. Thomas Manton.

Verse 2. Testimonies. The word of God is called his testimony, not only because it testifies his will concerning his service, but also his favour and goodwill concerning his own in Christ Jesus. If God's word were no more than a law, yet were we bound to obey it, because we are his creatures; but since it is also a testimony of his love, wherein as a father he witnesseth his favour towards his children, we are doubly inexcusable if we do not most joyfully embrace it. William Cowper.

Verse 2. Blessed are they... that seek him with the whole heart. He pronounces "blessed" not such as are wise in their own conceit, or assume a sort of fantastical holiness, but those who dedicate themselves to the covenant of God, and yield obedience to the dictates of his law, Farther, by these words, he tells us that God is by no means satisfied with mere external service, for he demands the sincere and honest affection of the heart. And assuredly, if God be the sole Judge and Disposer of our life, the truth must occupy the principal place in our heart, because it is not sufficient to have our hands and feet only enlisted in his service. John Calvin, 1509-1564.

Verse 2. The whole heart. Whosoever would have sound happiness must have a sound heart. So much sincerity as there is, so much blessedness there will be; and according to the degree of our hypocrisy, will be the measure of our misery. Richard Greenham, 1531-1591.

Verse 2-3. Observe the verbs seek, do, walk, all making up the subject to whom the blessedness belongs. Henry Hammond, 1605-1660.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 2. -- Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

1. The sacred Quest: "Seek him." He has been sought among the trees, the hills, the planets, the stars. He has been sought in his own defaced image, man. He has been sought amid the mysterious wheels of Providence. But these quests have often been prompted simply by

intellect, or compelled by conscience, and have therefore resulted but in a cold faint light. He has been sought in the word which this psalm so highly extols, when it has led up the smoke covered and gleaming peaks of Sinai. It has been followed, when it has led beneath the olives of Gethsemane to witness a mysterious struggle in blood sweating and anguish; to Calvary, where, in the place of a skull, life and immortality are brought to light. The sacred quest but there begins.

2. The Conduct of the Quest. Seekers might be mistakenly dejected by so literal an interpretation of the "whole heart." We do not hesitate to say a stream is in its whole volume flowing towards sea while there are little side creeks in which the water eddies backward; or to say the tide is coming despite receding waves; or that spring is upon us despite hailstorm and biting wind.

Indication of,

- a. Unity
- b. Intensity.
- c. Determination.

No one conducts this quest aright who is not prompted to or sustained in it by the gracious Spirit.

1. Blessedness both in the pursuit and issue.

(a) Blessedness in the bitterness of penitence. The door handle touched by him drops of myrrh. The rising sun sends kindling beams upon the highest peaks.

(b) Blessedness in the happy findings of salvation and adoption.

(c) Blessedness in the perpetual pursuit. --William Anderson, of Reading, 1882.

Verse 2. -- The double blessing.

1. On keeping the testimonies.
2. On seeking the Lord.

Verse 2. -- That seek him with the whole heart.

1. Seek what? God himself. No peace until he is found.
2. Seek where? In his testimonies.

(a) By studying them.

(b) By keeping to them.

1. Seek how? With the Whole heart. --George Rogers.

Verse 2. -- Seeking for God.

1. The Psalmist's way of seeking God.

(a) He sought God with the heart. Only the heart can find God. Sight fails.

"The scientific method" fails. All reason fails. Only love and trust can succeed. Love sees much where all other perception finds nothing. Faith generally goes with discovery, and nowhere so much as in finding God.

(b) He sought God with all his heart.

1. Half heartedness seldom finds anything worth having.

(2) Half heartedness shows contempt for God.

(3) God will not reveal himself to half heartedness. It would be putting the highest premium possible upon indifference.

1. The Psalmist's plea in seeking God: "Let me not wander from thy commandments"

- a. God's commandments lead, presently, into his own presence. If we take even the moral law, every one of the ten commandments leads away from the world, and sin, into that seclusion of holiness in which he hides. It is thus with all the commandments of the Scriptures.

(b) The earnestness of the souls search for God becomes, in itself, a plea with God that he will be found of us. God, who loves importunity in prayer, loves it no less when it takes the form of searching with all the heart. He who seeks with all the heart finds special encouragement to pray: "Let me not wander from thy commandments." --F.G. Marchant.

Verse 2. -- That seek him. We must remember six conditions required in them who would seek the Lord rightly.

1. We must seek him in Christ the Mediator. John 14:6.
2. We must seek him in truth. Jeremiah 10:10 John 4:24 Psalms 7:6.
3. We must seek him in holiness. 2 Timothy 2:19 Hebrews 12:14 1 John 1:3.
4. We must seek him above all things and for himself.
5. We must seek him by the light of his own word.
6. We must seek him diligently and with perseverance, never resting till we find him, with the spouse in the Canticles. --William Cowper.

Verse 2,4-5,8. -- Blessed are they that keep. "Thou hast commanded; us to keep." "O that my ways were directed to keep." "I will keep." Blessedness of keeping God's precepts -- displayed (Psalms 119:2), commanded (Psalms 119:4), for (Psalms 119:5), resolved upon (Psalms 119:8). -- C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 3. They also do no iniquity. Blessed indeed would those men be of whom this could be asserted without reserve and without explanation: we shall have reached the region of pure blessedness when we altogether cease from sin. Those who follow the word of God do no iniquity, the rule is perfect, and if it be constantly followed no fault will arise. Life, to the outward observer, at any rate, lies much in doing, and he who in his doings never swerves from equity, both towards God and man, has hit upon the way of perfection, and we may be sure that his heart is right. See how a whole heart leads to the avoidance of evil, for the Psalmist says, "That seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity." We fear that no man can claim to be absolutely without sin, and yet we trust there are many who do not designedly, wilfully, knowingly, and continuously do anything that is wicked, ungodly, or unjust. Grace keeps the life righteous as to act even when the Christian has to bemoan the transgressions of the heart. Judged as men should be judged by their fellows, according to such just rules as men make for men, the true people of God do no iniquity: they are honest, upright, and chaste, and touching justice and morality they are blameless. Therefore are they happy. They walk in his ways. They attend not only to the great main highway of the law, but to the smaller paths of the particular precepts. As they will perpetrate no sin of commission, so do they labour to be free from every sin of omission. It is not enough to them to be blameless, they wish also to be actively righteous. A hermit may escape into solitude that he may do no iniquity, but a saint lives in society that he may serve his God by walking in his ways. We must be positively as well as negatively right: we shall not long keep the second unless we attend to the first, for men will be walking one way or another, and if they do not follow the path of God's law they will soon do iniquity. The surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good. This verse describes believers as they exist among us: although they have their faults and infirmities, yet they hate evil, and will not permit themselves to do it; they love the ways of truth, right and true godliness, and habitually they walk therein. They do not claim to be absolutely perfect except in their desires, and there they are pure indeed, for they pant to be kept from all sin, and to be led into all holiness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 3. *They also do no iniquity.* If it be demanded here, How is it that they who walk in God's ways work no iniquity? Is there any man who lives, and sins not? And if they be not without sin, how then are they to be blessed? The answer is, as the apostle says of our knowledge, "We know but in part": so is it true of our felicity on earth, we are blessed but in a part. It is the happiness of angels that they never sinned; it is the happiness of triumphant saints, that albeit they have been sinners, yet now they sin no more; but the happiness of saints militant is, that our sins are forgiven us; and that albeit sin remains in us, yet it reigns not over us; it is done in us, but not by our allowance: "I do the evil which I would not." "Not I, but sin that dwells in me," [Romans 7:17](#).

To the doing of iniquity, these three things must concur; first, a purpose to do it; next, a delight in

doing it; thirdly, a continuance in it; which three in God's children never concur; for in sins done in them by the old man, the new man makes his exceptions and protestations against them. It is not I, says he; and so far is he from delighting in them, that rather his soul is grieved with them; even as Lot, dwelling among the Sodomites, was vexed by hearing and seeing their unrighteous deeds. In a word, the children of God are rather sufferers of sin against their wills than actors of it with their wills: like men spiritually oppressed by the power of their enemy; for which they sigh and cry unto God. "Miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And in this sense it is that the apostle saith, "He who is born of God sinneth not" ([1 John 3:9](#)). William Cowper.

Verse 3. *They also do no iniquity.* The blessedness of those who walk in the law: they do -- or have done -- no wickedness: but walk -- or have always walked -- in his ways. Throughout the Psalm it may be noticed that sometimes the present tense is employed indicating present action: sometimes the perfect to indicate past and present time: Ps 119:10-11,13-14,21, 51-61,101-102,131,145,147. The Speaker's Commentary, 1873.

Verse 3. *They also do no iniquity.* That is, they make not a trade and common practice thereof. Slip they do, through the infirmity of the flesh, and subtlety of Satan, and the allurements of the world; but they do not ordinarily and customably go forward in unlawful and sinful courses. In that the Psalmist setteth down this as a part (and not the least part neither) of blessedness, that they work none iniquity, which walk in his ways: the doctrine to be learned here is this, that it is a marvellous great prerogative to be freed from the bondage of sin. Richard Greenham.

Verse 3. *They do no iniquity.* All such as are renewed by grace, and reconciled to God by Christ Jesus; to these God imputeth no sin to condemnation, and in his account they do no iniquity. Notable is that which is said of David, "He kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was right in mine eyes" ([1 Kings 14:8](#)). How can that be? We may trace David by his failings, they are upon record everywhere in the word; yet here a veil is drawn upon them; God laid them not to his charge. There is a double reason why their failings are not laid to their charge. Partly, because of their general state, they are in Christ, taken into favour through him, and "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ" ([Romans 8:1](#)), therefore particular errors and escapes do not alter their condition; which is not to be understood as if a man should not be humbled, and ask God pardon for his infirmities; no, for then they prove iniquities and they will lie upon record against him. It was a gross fancy of the Valentinians, who held that they were not defiled with sin, whatsoever they committed; though base and obscene persons, yet still they were as gold in the dirt. No, no, we are to recover ourselves by repentance, to sue out the favour of God. When David humbled himself, and had repented, then saith Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin" ([2 Samuel 12:13](#)). Partly, too, because their bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise. They set themselves to comply with God's will, to seek and serve the Lord, though they are clogged with many infirmities. A wicked man

sinneth with deliberation and delight, his bent is to do evil, he makes "provision for lusts" ([Romans 13:14](#)), and "serves" them by a voluntary subjection ([Titus 3:3](#)). But those that are renewed by grace are not "debtors" to the flesh, they have taken another debt and obligation, which is to serve the Lord ([Romans 8:12](#)).

Partly, too, because their general course and way is to do otherwise. Everything works according to its form; the constant actions of nature are according to the kind. So the new creature, his constant operations are according to grace. A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours shows what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers the habit of his soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflowed, but marsh ground is drowned with every return of the tide. A child of God may be occasionally carried away, and act contrary to the inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome by the return of every temptation, it argues a habit of sin.

And partly, because sin never carries sway completely, but it is opposed by dislikes and resistances of the new nature. The children of God make it their business to avoid all sin, by watching, praying, mortifying: "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" ([Psalms 39:1](#)), and thus there is a resistance of the sin. God hath planted graces in their hearts, the fear of his Majesty, that works a resistance; and therefore there is not a full allowance of what they do. This resistance sometimes is more strong, then the temptation is overcome: "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" ([Genesis 39:9](#)). Sometimes it is more weak, and then sin carries it, though against the will of the holy man: "The evil which I hate, that do I" ([Romans 7:15,18](#)). It is the evil which they hate; they protest against it; they are like men which are oppressed by the power of the enemy. And then there is a remorse after the sin: David's heart smote him. It grieves and shames them that they do evil. Tenderness goes with the new nature: Peter sinned foully, but he went out and wept bitterly. Thomas Manton.

Verse 3. *They that have mortified their sins live in the contrary graces.* Hence it is that the Psalmist saith, that they work no iniquity, but walk in thy paths. First, they crucify all their sins, "they do no iniquity": secondly, as they do no iniquity, so they follow all the ways of God, contrary to that iniquity: as they give up all the ways of sin, so they take up all the ways of grace. It is a rule in divinity, that grace takes not away nature that is, grace comes not to take away a man's affections, but to take them up. William Fenner, 1600-1640.

Verse 3. *They walk in his ways.* It reproves those that rest in negatives. As it was said of a certain emperor, he was rather not vicious than virtuous. Many men, all their religion runs upon notes: "I am not as this publican" ([Luke 18:11](#)). That ground is naught, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yields not good increase. Not only the unruly servant is cast into hell, that beat his fellow servant, that ate and drank with the drunken; but the idle servant that wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Meroz

is cursed, not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping (Judges 5:23). Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him of his crumbs. Many will say, I set up no other gods; aye, but dost thou love, reverence, and obey the true God? For if not, thou dost fail in the first commandment. As to the second, thou sayest, I abhor idols; but dost thou delight in ordinances? I do not swear and rend the name of God by cursed oaths; aye, but dost thou glorify God, and honour him? I do not profane the Sabbath; but dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not plough and dance; but thou art idle, and toyst away the Sabbath. Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Thou art no adulterer; but dost thou study temperance and a holy sobriety in all things? Thou art no slanderer; but art thou tender of thy neighbour's honour and credit, as of thy own? Usually men cut off half their bill, as the unjust steward bade his lord's debtor set down fifty when he owed a hundred. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are not drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respect to God, and reverence for his holy Majesty. Thomas Manton.

Verse 3. *They walk in his ways.* Not in those of his enemies, nor even in their own. Joseph Addison Alexander, 1860.

Verse 3. *They walk in his ways.* Habitually, constantly, characteristically. They are not merely honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men; but they walk in the ways of God; they are religious. Albert Barnes, 1798- 1870.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 3. -- They also do no iniquity. They work no iniquity

1. Purpose of heart;
 2. Delight;
 3. Perseverance;
 4. Nor at all when heart is fully sanctified unto God; Christ dwelling in it by faith casting out sin.
- Adam Clarke.

Verse 3. -- The relation between negative and positive virtue. Or with God the best preventive of iniquity.

EXPOSITION

Verse 4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. So that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to have done, seeing we have our Lord's command for it. God's precepts require careful obedience: there is no keeping them by accident. Some give to God a careless service, a sort of hit or miss obedience, but the Lord has not commanded such service, nor will he accept it. His law demands the love of all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and a careless religion has none of these. We are also called to zealous

obedience. We are to keep the precepts abundantly: the vessels of obedience should be filled to the brim, and the command carried out to the full of its meaning. As a man diligent in business arouses himself to do as much trade as he can, so must we be eager to serve the Lord as much as possible. Nor must we spare pains to do so, for a diligent obedience will also be laborious and self denying. Those who are diligent in business rise up early and sit up late, and deny themselves much of comfort and repose. They are not soon tired, or if they are they persevere even with aching brow and weary eye. So should we serve the Lord. Such a Master deserves diligent servants; such service he demands, and will be content with nothing less. How seldom do men render it, and hence many through their negligence miss the double blessing spoken of in this Psalm.

Some are diligent in superstition and will worship; be it ours to be diligent in keeping God's precepts. It is of no use travelling fast if we are not in the right road. Men have been diligent in a losing business, and the more they have traded the more they have lost: this is bad enough in commerce, we cannot afford to have it so in our religion.

God has not commanded us to be diligent in making precepts, but in keeping them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture, and to strive to keep them all, in all places, towards all men, and in all respects. If we do not this, we may become eminent in our own religion, but we shall not have kept the command of God; nor shall we be accepted of him.

The Psalmist began with the third person: he is now coming near home, and has already reached the first person plural, according to our version; we shall soon hear him crying out personally and for himself. As the heart glows with love to holiness, we long to have a personal interest in it. The word of God is a heart affecting book, and when we begin to sing its praises it soon comes home to us, and sets us praying to be ourselves conformed to its teachings.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Verse 4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.* It is not a matter adiaforoj, and left to the discretion of men, either to hear, or to neglect sacred discourses, theological readings, and expositions of the Sacred Book; but God has commanded, and not commanded cursorily when speaking of another matter, but dam, earnestly and greatly he has commanded us to keep his precepts. There should be infixed in our mind the words found in Deuteronomy 6:6, "My words shall be in thy heart:" in Matthew 17:5, "Hear ye him." in John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures." Above all things, students of theology should remember the Pauline rule in 1Ti 3:, "Give attention to reading." Solomon Gesner.

Verse 4. *Thou hast commanded us,* etc. Hath God enjoined us to observe his precepts so exceedingly carefully and diligently? Then let nothing draw us therefrom, no, not in the least circumstance; let us esteem nothing needless, frivolous, or superfluous, that we have a warrant for

out of his word; nor count those too wise or precise that will stand resolutely upon the same: if the Lord require anything, though the world should gainsay it, and we be derided and abused for the doing of it, yet let us proceed still in the course of our obedience. Richard Greenham.

Verse 4. *Diligently.* For three causes should we keep the commandments of the Lord with diligence: first, because our adversary that seeks to snare us by the transgression of them is diligent in tempting, for he goes about, night and day, seeking to devour us; next, because we ourselves are weak and infirm, by the greater diligence have we need to take heed to ourselves; thirdly, because of the great loss we sustain by every vantage Satan gets over us; for we find by experience, that as a wound is sooner made than it is healed, so guiltiness of conscience is easily contracted, but not so easily done away. William Cowper.

Verse 4. *Diligently.* In this verse he reminds the reader how well he knew that this study of the divine law must necessarily be severe, (earnest), since God has commanded that it should be observed diligently; that is, with the profoundest study; as that which alone is good, and as everything is good which it commands. Antonio Brucioli, 1534.

Verse 4. *The word translated "diligently,"* doth signify in the original tongue wonderful much, so that the words go thus: "Thou hast commanded to keep thy precepts wonderful much." Richard Greenham.

Verse 4-5. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently,* Psalms 119:4; this is God's imperative. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Psalms 119:5; this should be our optative. Thomas Adams, 1614.

Verse 4-5. *It is very observable concerning David,* that when he prayeth so earnestly, O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes, he premises this as the reason, Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently, thereby intimating that the ground of his obedience to God's precepts was the stamp of divine authority enjoining him. To this purpose it is that he saith in Psalms 119:94, I have sought thy precepts, thereby implying that what he sought in his obedience was the fulfilling of God's will. Indeed, that only and properly is obedience which is done intuitu voluntatis divinae, with a respect to and eye upon the divine will. As that is only a divine faith which believeth a truth, not because of human reason but divine revelation, so that only is a true obedience which conforms to the command, not because it may consist with any selfish ends, but because it carrieth in it an impression of Christ's authority. Nathanael Hardy.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 4. --

1. Take notice of the law giver: "Thou." :Not thy equal one that will be baffled, but the great God.
2. He hath interposed authority: "hast commanded."
3. The nature of this obedience, or thing commanded: "To keep thy precepts." --T. Manton.

Verse 4. -- The supplementary commandment. God having ordained moral law, supplements it with a commandment prescribing the manner keeping it. Hence:

1. God is not indifferent to men's treatment of his -- whether they observe, neglect, or defy it.
2. When observed, discriminates the spirit of its observance, whether slavish, partial, or diligent.
3. There is but one spirit of obedience which satisfies requirement. "Diligently" implies an obedience which is, -- careful ascertain the law -- prompt to fulfil it (Psalms 119:60) -- unreserved -- love inspired ("diligently," old meaning, through the Latin, "lovingly," Ps 119:47,113).
4. Does our obedience come up to this standard? --C A.D.

Verse 4. -- Not only is service commanded, but the manner of it. Heartiness, care, perseverance required, because without these it will not be uniform, or victorious over difficulty.

Verse 4. -- How to obey: "Diligently."

1. Not, partially, but fully.
2. Not doubtfully, but confidently.
3. Not reluctantly, but readily.
4. Slovenly, but carefully.
5. Not coldly, but earnestly.
6. Not fitfully, but regularly. --W. J.

Verse 4-6. -- A willing recognition (Psalms 119:4). An ardent as (Psalms 119:5). A happy consequence (Psalms 119:6). --W. D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Divine commands should direct us in the subject of our prayers. We cannot of ourselves keep God's statutes as he would have them kept, and yet we long to do so: what resort have we but prayer? We must ask the Lord to work our works in us, or we shall never work out his commandments. This verse is a sigh of regret because the Psalmist feels that he has not kept the precepts diligently, it is a cry of weakness appealing for help to one who can aid, it is a request of bewilderment from one who has lost his way and would fain be directed in it, and it is a petition of faith from one who loves God and trusts in him for grace.

Our ways are by nature opposed to the way of God, and must be turned by the Lord's direction in another direction from that which they originally take or they will lead us down to destruction. God can direct the mind and will without violating our free agency, and he will do so in answer to prayer; in fact, he has begun the work already in those who are heartily praying after the fashion of this verse. It is for present holiness that the desire arises in the heart. O that it were so now with me: but future persevering holiness is also meant, for he longs for grace to keep henceforth and for ever the

statutes of the Lord.

The sigh of the text is really a prayer, though it does not exactly take that form. Desires and longings are of the essence of supplication, and it little matters what shape they take. "O that" is as acceptable a prayer as "Our Father."

One would hardly have expected a prayer for direction; rather should we have looked for a petition for enabling. Can we not direct ourselves? What if we cannot row, we can steer. The Psalmist herein confesses that even for the smallest part of his duty he felt unable without grace. He longed for the Lord to influence his will, as well as to strengthen his hands. We want a rod to point out the way as much as a staff to support us in it.

The longing of the text is prompted by admiration of the blessedness of holiness, by a contemplation of the righteous man's beauty of character, and by a reverent awe of the command of God. It is a personal application to the writer's own case of the truths which he had been considering. "O that my ways," etc. It were well if all who hear and read the word would copy this example and turn all that they hear into prayer. We should have more keepers of the statutes if we had more who sighed and cried after the grace to do so.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 5. *In tracing the connection of this verse with the preceding, we cannot forbear to remark how accurately the middle path is preserved, as keeping us at an equal distance from the idea of self-sufficiency to keep the Lord's statutes, and self-justification in neglecting them. The first attempt to render spiritual obedience will quickly convince us of our utter helplessness. We might as soon create a world as create in our hearts one pulse of spiritual life. And yet our inability does not cancel our obligation. It is the weakness of a heart that "cannot be subject to the law of God," for no other reason than because it is "carnal," and therefore "enmity against God." Our inability is our sin, our guilt, our condemnation, and instead of excusing our condition, stops our mouth, and leaves us destitute of any plea of defence before God. Thus our obligation remains in full force. We are bound to obey the commands of God, whether we can or not. What, then, remains for us, but to return the mandate to heaven, accompanied with an earnest prayer, that the Lord would write upon our hearts those statutes to which he requires obedience in his word? Thou hast commanded us to keep thy statutes diligently. We acknowledge, Lord, our obligation, but we feel our impotency. Lord, help us; we look unto thee. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Charles Bridges, 1849.*

Verse 5. *O that, etc.* In the former verse the prophet David observes the charge which God gives, and that is, that his commandments be diligently kept: here, then, he observes his own weakness and insufficiency to discharge that great duty, and therefore, as one by the spirit desirous to discharge it, and yet by the flesh not able to discharge it, he breaketh out into these words, O that my ways were directed, etc. Much like unto a child that being commanded to take up some great weight

from the ground, is willing to do it, though not able to do it: or a sick patient advised to walk many turns in his chamber, finds a desire in his heart, though inability in his body to do that which he is directed unto. Richard Greenham.

Verse 5. *O that my ways,* etc. It is the use and duty of the people of God to turn precepts into prayers. That this is the practice of God's children appeareth: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God" ([Jeremiah 31:18](#)). God had said, "Turn you, and you shall live," and they ask it of God, "Turn us," as he required it of them. It was Austin's prayer, *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, "Give what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt." It is the duty of the saints; for, 1st, It suits with the Gospel covenant, where precepts and promises go hand in hand; where God giveth what he commandeth, and worketh all our works in us and for us. They are not conditions of the covenant only, but a part of it. What God hath required at our hands, that we may desire at his hands. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he giveth no straw. *Lex jubet, gracia juvat*. The articles of the new covenant are not only put into the form of precepts, but promises. The law giveth no strength to perform anything, but the Gospel offereth grace. Secondly, Because, by this means, the ends of God are fulfilled. Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it,

1. To keep up his right.
2. To convince us of our impotency, and that, upon a trial, without his grace we cannot do his work.
3. That the creature may express his readiness to obey.
4. To bring us to lie at his feet for grace. Thomas Manton.

Verse 5. *O that,* etc. The whole life of a good Christian is an holy desire, saith Augustine; and this is always seconded with endeavour, without the which, affection is like Rachel, beautiful, but barren. John Trapp.

Verse 5. *O that my ways were directed,* etc. The original word *!wk, kun*, is sometimes rendered to establish, and, accordingly, it may seem as if the prophet were soliciting for himself the virtue of perseverance. I am rather inclined to understand it as signifying to direct for, although God is plainly instructing us in his law, the obtuseness of our understanding and the perversity of our hearts constantly need the direction of his Spirit. John Calvin.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 5. -- The prayer of the gracious.

1. Suggested by each preceding clause of blessing.
2. By a consciousness of failure.
3. By a loving clinging to the Lord.

Verse 5. --

1. The end desired: "To keep thy statutes." Not to be safe merely, or happy, but holy.

2. The help implored.

(a) To understand the divine precepts.

(b) To keep them. --G. R.

Verse 5. -- Longing to obey.

1. It is a noble aspiration. There is nothing grander than the desire to do this except the doing of it.
2. It is a spiritual aspiration. Not the offspring of our carnal nature. It is the heart of God in the new creature.
3. It is a practicable aspiration. We sometimes sigh for the impossible. But this may be attained by divine grace.
4. It is an intense aspiration. It is the "Oh!" of a burning wish.
5. It is an influential aspiration. It does not evaporate in sighs. It is a mighty incentive implanted by grace which will not let us rest without holiness. --W. J.

EXPOSITION

Verse 6. Then shall I not be ashamed. He had known shame, and here he rejoices in the prospect of being freed from it. Sin brings shame, and when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished. What a deliverance this is, for to some men death is preferable to shame!

When I have respect unto all thy commandments. When he respects God he shall respect himself and be respected. Whenever we err we prepare ourselves for confusion of face and sinking of heart: if no one else is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of myself if I do iniquity. Our first parents never knew shame till they made the acquaintance of the old serpent, and it never left them till their gracious God had covered them with sacrificial skins. Disobedience made them naked and ashamed. We, ourselves, will always have cause for shame till every sin is vanquished, and every duty is observed. When we pay a continual and universal respect to the will of the Lord, then we shall be able to look ourselves in the face in the looking glass of the law, and we shall not blush at the sight of men or devils, however eager their malice may be to lay somewhat to our charge.

Many suffer from excessive diffidence, and this verse suggests a cure. An abiding sense of duty will make us bold, we shall be afraid to be afraid. No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds. When we are on the king's highway by daylight, and are engaged upon royal business, we need ask no man's leave. It would be a dishonour to a king to be ashamed of his livery and his service; no such shame should ever crimson the cheek of a Christian, nor will it if he has due reverence for the Lord his God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life; a man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, ashamed of his own children, but he will never be ashamed of having in all things regarded the will of the Lord his God.

It is worthy of remark that David promises himself no immunity from shame till he has carefully paid homage to all the precepts. Mind that word "all," and leave not one command out of your respect. Partial obedience still leaves us liable to be called to account for those commands which we have neglected. A man may have a thousand virtues, and yet a single failing may cover him with shame. To a poor sinner who is buried in despair, it may seem a very unlikely thing that he should ever be delivered from shame. He blushes, and is confounded, and feels that he can never lift up his face again. Let him read these words: "Then shall I not be ashamed." David is not dreaming, nor picturing an impossible case. Be assured, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit can renew in you the image of God, so that you shall yet look up without fear. O for sanctification to direct us in God's way, for then shall we have boldness both towards God and his people, and shall no more crimson with confusion.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed.* No one likes to be ashamed or to blush: therefore all things which bring shame after them must be avoided: [Ezra 9:6](#) [Jeremiah 3:25](#) [Daniel 9:7,9](#). As the workman keeps his eye fixed on his pattern, and the scholar on the copy of his writing master; so the godly man ever and anon turns his eyes to the word of his God. Martin Geier.

Verse 6. *There is a twofold shame; the shame of a guilty conscience; and the shame of a tender conscience.* The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace. This which is here spoken of is to be understood not of a holy self loathing, but a confounding shame. Thomas Manton.

Verse 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed,* etc. Then shall I have confidence both towards God and man, and mine own soul, when I can pronounce of myself that my obedience is impartial, and uniform, and universal, no secret sin reserved for my favour, no least commandment knowingly or willingly neglected by me. Henry Hammond.

Verse 6. *Then shall I not be ashamed,* etc. You ask, Why is he not ashamed who has respect unto all the commandments of God? I answer, the sense is, as if he had said, The commandments of God are so pure and excellent, that though thou shouldest regard the whole and each one of them most attentively, thou wouldest not find anything that would cause thee to blush. The laws of Lycurgus are praised; but they permitted theft. The statutes of Plato are praised; but they commended the community of wives. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:" [Psalms 19:7](#). It is a mirror, reflecting the beautiful light of the stars on him who looks into it. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 6. *The blessing here spoken of is freedom from shame in looking unto all the commandments.* If God hear prayer, and establish the soul in this habit of keeping the commandments, there will be yet this further blessing of being able to look unto every precept without shame. Many men can look at some commandments without shame. Turning to the ten commandments, the honest man feels no shame as he gazes on the eighth, the pure man is free from reproach as he reads the seventh, he who is reverent and hates blasphemy is not rebuked by the thought that he has violated the third,

while the filial spirit rather delights in than shuns the fifth. So on with the remainder. Most men perhaps can look at some of the precepts with comparative freedom from reproof. But who can so look unto them all? Yet this, also, the godly heart aspires to. In this verse we find the Psalmist consciously anticipating the truth of a word in the New Testament: "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." Frederick G. Marchant.

Verse 6. *Ashamed.* I can bear scorpion's stings, tread fields of fire, In frozen gulfs of cold eternal lie; Be tossed aloft through tracts of endless void, But cannot live in shame. Joanna Baillie, 1762-1851.

Verse 6. *When I have respect unto all thy commandments.* Literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man intends to keep ALL the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man can be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep ALL, the commandments of God; to submit to his will in everything. Albert Barnes.

Verse 6. *All thy commandments.* There is the same reason for obedience to one command as another, -- God's authority, who is the Lawgiver ([James 2:11](#)); and therefore when men choose one duty and overlook others, they do not so much obey the will of God, as gratify their own humours and fancies, pleasing Him only so far as they can please themselves too; and this is not reasonable; we never yield him a "reasonable service," but when it is universal. Edward Veal (1632-1708), in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 6. *All thy commandments.* A partial obedience will never satisfy a child of God. The exclusion of any commandment from its supreme regard in the heart is the brand of hypocrisy. Even Herod could "do many things," and yet one evil way cherished, and therefore unforsaken, was sufficient to show the sovereign power of sin undisturbed within. Saul slew all the Amalekites but one; and that single exception in the path of universal obedience marked the unsoundness of his profession, cost him the loss of his throne, and brought him under the awful displeasure of his God. And thus the foot, or the hand, or the right eye, the corrupt unmortified members, bring the whole body to hell. Reserves are the canker of Christian sincerity. Charles Bridges.

Verse 6. *Unto all thy commandments.* Allow that any of God's commandments may be transgressed, and we shall soon have the whole decalogue set aside. Adam Clarke, 1760-1832.

Verse 6. *Many will do some good,* but are defective in other things, and usually in those which are most necessary. They cull out the easiest and cheapest parts of religion, such as do not contradict

their lusts and interests. We can never have sound peace till we regard all. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments. Shame is fear of a just reproof. This reproof is either from the supreme or the deputy judge. The supreme judge of all our actions is God. This should be our principal care, that we may not be ashamed before him at his coming, nor disapproved in the judgment. But there is a deputy judge which every man has in his own bosom. Our consciences do acquit or condemn us as we are partial or sincere in our duty to God, and much depends on that. 1 John 3:20-21, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Well, then, that our hearts may not reprove or reproach us, we should be complete in all the will of God. Alas, otherwise you will never have evidence of your sincerity. Thomas Manton.

Verse 6. *Such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children*, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were a full obedience... O, who would not serve such a Lord? You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as so rigid and strict, that they can never please them; no, not when they do their utmost: but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel indulgence when he said, Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments, when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going to, though he be as yet short of it; there he would be, and he is putting on all he can to reach it: so stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame. William Gurnall, 1617-1679.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 6. -- See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1443: "A Clear Conscience."

Verse 6. -- Holy confidence the offspring of universal obedience.

Verse 6. -- The armour of proof.

1. Universal obedience will give unabashed confidence --
 - (a) Before the criticising world.
 - (b) In the court of conscience.
 - (c) At the throne of grace.
 - (d) In the day of judgment.
1. But our obedience is far from universal, and leaves us open to
 - (a) The world's shafts.
 - (b) The rebukes of conscience.
 - (c) It paralyses our prayers
 - (d) It dares not appear for us at the bar of God.

1. Then let us by faith wrap ourselves in the perfect righteousness of Christ. Our answer to the world's cavil. We are not faultless, and for salvation we rest wholly on another. This righteousness is --

a. The salve of our wounded conscience.

(b) Our mighty plea in prayer.

(c) Our triumphant vindication in the judgment day. --C. A.D.

Verse 6. -- Topic: -- Self respect depends on respect for one greater than self. --W. D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 7. I will praise thee. From prayer to praise is here, a long or a difficult journey. Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, "I will praise thee." He cannot but promise praise while he seeks sanctification. Mark how well he knows upon what head to set the crown. "I will praise thee." He would himself be praiseworthy, but he counts God alone worthy of praise. By the sorrow and shame of sin he measures his obligations to the Lord who would teach him the art of living so that he should clean escape from his former misery.

With up righteous of heart. His heart would be upright if the Lord would teach him, and then it should praise its teacher. There is such a thing as false and feigned praise, and this the Lord abhors; but there is no music like that which comes from a pure soul which standeth in its integrity. Heart praise is required, uprightness in that heart, and teaching to make the heart upright. An upright heart is sure to bless the Lord, for grateful adoration is a part of its uprightness; no man can be right unless he is upright towards God, and this involves the rendering to him the praise which is his due.

When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned. If we are ever to learn, the Lord must teach us, and especially upon such a subject as his judgments, for they are a great deep. While these are passing before our eyes, and we are learning from them, we ought to praise God, for the original is not, "when I have learned," but, "in my learning." While yet I am a scholar I will be a chorister: my upright heart shall praise thine uprightness, my purified judgment shall admire thy judgments. God's providence is a book full of teaching, and to those whose hearts are right it is a music book, out of which they chant to Jehovah's praise. God's word is full of the record of his righteous providence, and as we read it we feel compelled to burst forth into expressions of holy delight and ardent praise. When we both read of God's judgments and become joyful partakers in them, we are doubly moved to song -- song in which there is neither formality, nor hypocrisy, nor lukewarmness, for the heart is upright in the presentation of its praise.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 7. *I will praise thee...* when I shall have learned, etc. There is no way to please God entirely and sincerely until we have learned both to know and do his will. Practical praise is the praise God looks after. Thomas Manton.

Verse 7. *I will praise thee.* What is the matter for which he praises God? It is that he has been taught something of him and by him amongst men. To have learned any tongue, or science, from some school of philosophy, bindeth us to our alma mater. We praise those who can teach a dog, a horse, this or that; but for us ass colts to learn the will of God, how to walk pleasing before him, this should be acknowledged of us as a great mercy from God. Paul Bayne.

Verse 7. *Praise thee...*when I shall have learned, etc. But when doth David say that he will be thankful? Even when God shall teach him. Both the matter and the grace of thankfulness are from God. As he did with Abraham, he commanded him to worship by sacrifice, and at the same time gave him the sacrifice: so doth he with all his children; for he gives not only good things, for which they should thank him, but in like manner grace by which they are able to thank him. William Cowper.

Verse 7. *When, I shall have learned.* By learning he means his attaining not only to the knowledge of the word, but the practice of it. It is not a speculative light, or a bare notion of things: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" ([John 6:45](#)). It is such a learning as the effect will necessarily follow, such a light and illumination as doth convert the soul, and frame our hearts and ways according to the will of God. For otherwise, if we get understanding of the word, nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good without practice. The best of God's servants are but scholars and students in the knowledge and obedience of his word. For saith David, "When I shall have learned." The professors of the Christian religion were primitively called disciples or learners: to plhqoj twn maqhtwn; "the multitude of the disciples" ([Acts 6:2.](#)) Thomas Manton.

Verse 7. *Learned thy righteous judgments.* We see here what David especially desired to learn, namely, the word and will of God: he would ever be a scholar in this school, and sought daily to ascend to the highest form; that learning to know, he might remember; remembering, might believe; believing, might delight; delighting might admire; admiring, might adore; adoring, might practise; and practising, might continue in the way of God's statutes. This learning is the old and true learning indeed, and he is best learned in this art, who turneth God's word into good works. Richard Greenham.

Verse 7. *Judgments of thy righteousness are the decisions concerning right and wrong which give expression to and put in execution the righteousness of God.* Franz Delitzsch.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 7. -- The best of praise, the best of learning, the best of blendings, viz., praise and holiness.

Verse 7. --

1. The professor of sacred music: "I will praise."
2. The subject of his song: "Thee."
3. The instrument: "Heart."
4. The instrument tuned: "Uprightness of heart."
5. The musician's training academy: "Judgments." --W.D.

Verse 7. -- Learning and praising.

1. They are two spiritual exercises. It is possible for learners and singers to be carnal and sensual; but in this case they are employed about the righteous ends, works, and ways of the Lord.
2. They are two appropriate exercises. What can be more seemly than to learn of God and to praise him?
3. They are two profitable exercises. The expectations of the most utilitarian are surpassed. The pleasure and the profit yield abundant reward. Heart, head, life are all benefited.
4. They are two mutually assisting exercises. In the one we are receptive, and in the other communicative. By the one we are fitted to do the other. By the former we are stimulated to do the latter. How wonderfully the lesson is turned into a song, and the learner into a singer.
--W.J.

Verse 7. --

1. Deficiency confessed: "When I shall have learned." This is essential to growth. It is an admission all can truly make.
2. Progress anticipated. He gave his heart to the work of learning. He sought divine help.
3. Praise promised. He promised it to God alone. He vowed it should be sincere: "with upright heart." --W. Williams, of Lambeth, 1882.

EXPOSITION

Verse 8. I will keep thy statutes. A calm resolve. When praise calms down into solid resolution it is well with the soul. Zeal which spends itself in singing, and leaves no practical residuum of holy living, is little worth: "I will praise" should be coupled with "I will keep." This firm resolve is by no means boastful, like Peter's "though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee," for it is followed by a humble prayer for divine help,

O forsake me not utterly. Feeling his own incapacity, he trembles lest he should be left to himself, and this fear is increased by the horror which he has of falling into sin. The "I will keep" sounds lightly enough now that the humble cry is heard with it. This is a happy amalgam: resolution and dependence. We meet with those who to all appearance humbly pray, but there is no force of character, no decision in them, and consequently the pleading of the closet is not embodied in the

life: on the other hand, we meet with abundance of resolve attended with an entire absence of dependence upon God, and this makes as poor a character as the former. The Lord grant us to have such a blending of excellences that we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

This prayer is one which is certain to be heard, for assuredly it must be highly pleasing to God to see a man set upon obeying his will, and therefore it must be most agreeable to him to be present with such a person, and to help him in his endeavours. How can he forsake one who does not forsake his law?

The peculiar dread which tinges this prayer with a sombre hue is the fear of utter forsaking. Well may the soul cry out against such a calamity. To be left, that we may discover our weakness, is a sufficient trial: To be altogether forsaken would be ruin and death. Hiding the face in a little wrath for a moment brings us very low: an absolute desertion would land us ultimately in the lowest hell. But the Lord never has utterly forsaken his servants, and he never will, blessed be his name. If we long to keep his statutes he will keep us; yea, his grace will keep us keeping his law.

There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of [Psalms 119:5](#) is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two, "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 8. *This verse*, being the last of this portion, is the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of the keeping the law of God there take notice:

1. Of his resolution, I will keep thy statutes.
2. Of his prayer, O forsake me not utterly. It is his purpose to keep the law; yet because he is conscious to himself of many infirmities, he prays against desertion.

In the prayer more is intended than is expressed. "O forsake me not", he means, strengthen me in this work; and if thou shouldst desert me, yet but for a while, Lord, not for ever; if in part, not in whole. Four points we may observe hence:

1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution as to a course of godliness.
2. Those that resolve upon a course of obedience have need to fly to God's help.
3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw, and seem to forsake us.
4. Though God seem to forsake us, and really doth so in part; yet we should pray that it may not be a total and utter desertion. Thomas Manton.

Verse 8 (with 7). *I will keep thy statutes*, etc. The resolution to "keep the Lord's statutes" is the natural result of having "learned his righteous judgments." And on this point David illustrates the inseparable and happy union of "simplicity" of dependence, and "godly sincerity" of obedience. Instantly upon forming his resolution, he recollects that the performance of it is beyond the power of human strength, and therefore the next moment he follows it with prayer: *I will keep thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly.* Charles Bridges.

Verse 8. *I will.* David setteth a personal example of holiness. If the king of Israel keep God's statutes, the people of Israel wilt be ashamed to neglect them. Caesar was wont to say, Princes must not say, *Ite, go ye, without me; but, Venite, come ye, along with me.* So said Gideon (Judges 5:17): "As ye see me do, so do ye." R. Greenham.

Verse 8. *Forsake me not utterly.* There is a total and a partial desertion. Those who are bent to obey God may for a while, and in some degree, be left to themselves. We cannot promise ourselves an utter immunity from desertion; but it is not total. We shall find for his great name's sake, "The Lord will not forsake his people" (1 Samuel 12:22), and, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Not utterly, yet in part they may be forsaken. Elijah was forsaken, but not as Ahab: Peter was forsaken in part, but not as Judas, who was utterly forsaken, and made a prey to the Devil. David was forsaken to be humbled and bettered; but Saul was forsaken utterly to be destroyed. Saith Theophylact, God may forsake his people so as to shut out their prayers, (Psalms 80:4), so as to interrupt the peace and joy of their heart, and abate their strength, so that their spiritual life may be much at a stand, and sin may break out, and they may fall foully; but they are not utterly forsaken. One way or other, God is still present; present in light sometimes when he is not present in strength, when he manifests the evil of their present condition, so as to make them mourn under it; and present in awakening their desires, though not in giving them enjoyment. As long as there is any esteem of God, he is not yet gone; there is some light and love yet left, manifested by our desires of communion with him. Thomas Manton.

Verse 8. *Forsake me not utterly.* The desertions of God's elect are first of all partial, that is, such as wherein God doth not wholly forsake them, but in some part. Secondly, temporary, that is, for some space of time, and never beyond the compass of this present life. "For a moment (saith the Lord in Esay) in mine anger I hid my face from thee for a little season, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." And to this purpose David, well acquainted with this matter, prayeth, "Forsake me not overlong." This sort of desertions, though it be but for a time, yet no part of a Christian man's life is free from them; and very often taking deep place in the heart of man, they are of long continuance. David continued in his dangerous fall about the space of a whole year before he was recovered. Luther confesseth of himself, that, after his conversion, he lay three years in desperation. Common observation in such like cases hath made record of even longer times

of spiritual forsaking. Richard Greenham.

Verse 8. *O forsake me not utterly.* This prayer reads like the startled cry of one who was half afraid that he had been presumptuous in expressing the foregoing resolve. He desired to keep the divine statutes, and like Peter he vowed that he would do so; but remembering his own weakness, he recoils from his own venturesomeness, and feels that he must pray. I have made a solemn vow, but what if I have uttered it in my own strength? What if God should leave me to myself? He is filled with terror at the thought. He breaks out with an "O." He implores and beseeches the Lord not to test him by leaving him even for an instant entirely to himself. To be forsaken of God is the worst ill that the most melancholy saint ever dreams of. Thank God, it will never fall to our lot; for no promise can be more express than that which saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This promise does not prevent our praying, but excites us to it. Because God will not forsake his own, therefore do we cry to him in the agony of our feebleness, "O forsake me not utterly." C. H. S.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 8. --

1. A hopeful resolve for life.
2. A dreadful fear.
3. A series of considerations removing the fear.

Verse 8. --

1. The resolution: "I will keep," etc.
2. The position: "O forsake me not utterly."

(a) Filial submission. I deserve it occasionally.

(b) Filial confidence. "Not utterly."

1. The connection between the two. Obedience without prayer and prayer without obedience are equally in vain. To make headway both oars must be applied. God cannot abide lazy beggars, who while they can get anything by asking will not work. -- G.R.

Verse 8. -- O forsake me not utterly. Divine desertion deprecated.

1. The anguished prayer.

(a) Sovereign forsaking. Sovereignty is not arbitrariness or capriciousness: perhaps its right definition is mysterious kingly love; unknown now, but justified when revealed.

(b) Vicarious forsaking.

(c) Forsaking on account of sin. David, Jonah, and Peter.

The seven churches of Asia; the Jews. But to know what

"utter" both in regard to degree and time means, we must go

to hell. Like one trembling on the very verge of hell, he prays. Like belated traveller, in vast wood and surrounded by beasts of prey, sighs at day's departure. Like the watch on the raft seeing the sail that he has shouted himself hoarse to stop fading away in the sky line.

1. Its doctrinal foundation. Where he condescends to dwell, his abode is perpetual. He can only utterly forsake us because he was deceived in us. He can only utterly forsake because baffled. Both imply blasphemy. Thou who hatest putting away thou who hast never yet utterly forsaken any saint, make not me the solitary exception.
2. Historical certainty of answer. The saint and the church in all time delivered. It may tarry till "eventide," as in Cowper's case. His face bore after death an expression of delighted surprise.
--W.A.

EXPOSITION

Verse 9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is but a young man, full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience; how shall he get right, and keep right? Never was there a more important question for any man; never was there a fitter time for asking it than at the commencement of life. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent young man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be himself clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last; but, alas, his way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed, and he himself has within his nature a tendency towards that which defileth. Here, then, is the difficulty, first of beginning aright, next of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right till perfection is ultimately reached: this is hard for any man, how shall a youth accomplish it? The way, or life, of the man has to be cleansed from the sins of his youth behind him, and kept clear of the sins which temptation will place before him: this is the work, this is the difficulty.

No nobler ambition can lie before a youth, none to which he is called by so sure a calling; but none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious enterprise of living a pure and gracious life; rather let him enquire the way by which all obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the Psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of defilers by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled. He is young and unaccustomed to the road, let him not be

ashamed often to enquire his way of him who is so ready and so able to instruct him in it.

Our "way" is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which rather puzzle than enlighten the mind. Among all the questions which a young man asks, and they are many, let this be the first and chief: "Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?" This is a question suggested by common sense, and pressed home by daily occurrences; but it is not to be answered by unaided reason, nor, when answered, can the directions be carried out by unsupported human power. It is ours to ask the question, it is God's to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless man ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought, we have only to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls; but to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind. Let the careless remember this.

Yet the "word" is absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, care will darken into morbid anxiety, and conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to be right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. Should a man carefully measure out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial, and has poured out a deadly poison: the fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young man may surround himself with ten thousand ills, by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the word of God. Wilful ignorance is in itself wilful sin, and the evil which comes of it is without excuse. Let each man, whether young or old, who desires to be holy have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness, so that by its help he shall reach the benediction of the first verse of the Psalm, which suggested the Psalmist's enquiry, and awakened his desires.

Note how the first section of eight verses has for its first verse, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically

sought for in the way appointed. The Lord saith, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

The eight verses alphabetically arranged:

1. By what means shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.
2. By day and by night have I sought thee with my whole heart: O let me not wander from thy commandments.
3. By thy grace I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
4. Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.
5. By the words of my lips will I declare all the judgments of thy mouth.
6. By far more than in all riches I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.
7. By thy help I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
8. By thy grace I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. Theodore Kuebler.

Whole eight verses, 9-16. Every verse in the section begins with b, a house. The subject of the section is, The Law of Jehovah purifying the Life. Key word, xkz (zakah), to be pure, to make pure, to cleanse. F. G. Marchant.

Verse 9. *Whole verse.* In this passage there is,

1. A question.
2. An answer given.

In the question, there is the person spoken of, "a young man," and his work, "Wherewithal shall he cleanse his way?" In this question there are several things supposed.

1. That we are from the birth polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not direct "his way," but "cleanse his way."
2. That we should be very early and betimes sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man.
3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy, how to dry up the issue of sin that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is enquired after is, What remedy there is against it? What course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer is given: "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Where two things are to be observed.

1. The remedy.
2. The manner how it is applied and made use of.

3. The remedy is the word; by way of address to God, called "Thy word"; because, if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss.
4. The manner how it is applied and made use of, "by taking heed thereto," etc.; by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will. Thomas Manton.

Verse 9. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? etc.* Aristotle, that great dictator in philosophy, despaired of achieving so great an enterprise as the rendering a young man capable of his *hqika akroamata*, "his grave and severe lectures of morality"; for that age is light and foolish, yet headstrong and untractable. Now, take a young man all in the heat and boiling of his blood, in the highest fermentation of his youthful lusts; and, at all these disadvantages, let him enter that great school of the Holy Spirit, the divine Scripture, and commit himself to the conduct of those blessed oracles; and he shall effectually be convinced, by his own experience, of the incredible virtue, the vast and mighty power, of God's word, in the success it hath upon him, and in his daily progression and advances in heavenly wisdom. John Gibbon (about 1660) in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 9. *A young man.* A prominent place -- one of the twenty-two parts -- is assigned to young men in the 119th Psalm. It is meet that it should be so. Youth is the season of impression and improvement, young men are the future props of society, and the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, must begin in youth. The strength, the aspirations, the unmarred expectations of youth, are in requisition for the world; O that they may be consecrated to God. John Stephen, in "The Utterances of the 119 Psalm," 1861.

Verse 9. *For young man,* in the Hebrew the word is *r[g naar*, i.e., "shaken off"; that is to say, from the milder and more tender care of his parents. Thus Mercerus and Savailerius. Secondly, *naar* may be rendered "shaking off"; that is to say, the yoke, for a young man begins to cast off the maternal, and frequently the paternal, yoke. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 9. *Cleanse his way.* The expression does not absolutely convey the impression that the given young man is in a corrupt and discreditable way which requires cleansing, though this be true of all men originally: [Isaiah 53:6](#). That which follows makes known that such could not be the case with this young man. The very inquiry shows that his heart is not in a corrupt state. Desire is present, direction is required. The inquiry is -- How shall a young man make a clean way -- a pure line of conduct -- through this defiling world? It is a question, I doubt not, of great anxiety to every convert whose mind is awakened to a sense of sin -- how he shall keep clear of the sin, avoid the loose company, and rid himself of the wicked pleasures and practices of this enslaving world. And as he moves on in the line of integrity -- many temptations coming in his way, and much inward corruption rising up to control him -- how often will the same anxious inquiry arise: [Ro 7:24](#). It is only in a false estimate of one's own strength that any can think otherwise, and the spirit of such false estimate will be brought low. How felt you, my young friends, who have been brought to Christ, in the day of your resolving to be

his? But for all such anxiety there seems to be an answer in the text.

By taking heed thereto according to thy word. It is not that young men in our day require information: they require the inclination. In the gracious young man there are both, and the word that began feeds the proper motives. The awful threatenings and the sweet encouragements both more him in the right direction. The answer furnished to this anxious inquiry is sufficiently plain and practical. He is directed to the word of God for all direction, and we might say, for all promised assistance. Still the matter presented in this light does not appear to me to bring out the full import of the passage. The inquiry to me would seem to extend over the whole verse. (This opinion is confirmed by the quotation which follows from Cowles.) There is required the cleansing that his way be according to the Divine Word. The enquiry is of the most enlarged comprehension, and will be made only by one who can say that he has been honestly putting himself in the way, as the young man in Psalms 119:10-11; and it can be answered only by the heart that takes in all the strength provided by the blessed God, as is expressed here in Psalms 119:12. The Psalmist makes the inquiry, he shows how earnestly he had sought to be in the right way, and immediately he finds all his strength in God. Thus he declares how he has been enabled to do rightly, and how he will do rightly in the future. John Stephen.

Verse 9. *Instead of question and answer both in this one verse*, the Hebrew demands the construction with question only, leaving the answer to be inferred from the drift of the entire Psalm -- thus: Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way to keep it according to thy word? This translation gives precisely the force of the last clause. Hebrew punctuation lacks the interrogation point, so that we have no other clue but the form of the sentence and the sense by which to decide where the question ends. Henry Cowles, 1872.

Verse 9. *His way.* xra, orach, which we translate way here, signifies a track, a rut, such as is made by the wheel of a cart or chariot. A young sinner has no broad beaten path; he has his private ways of offence, his secret pollutions; and how shall he be cleansed from these? how can he be saved from what will destroy mind, body, and soul? Let him hear what follows; the description is from God.

1. He is to consider that his way is impure; and how abominable this must make him appear in the sight of God.
2. He must examine it according to God's word, and carefully hear what God has said concerning him and it.
3. He must take heed to it, rmfl, lishmor, to keep, guard, and preserve his way -- his general course of life, from all defilement. Adam Clarke.

Verse 9. *By taking heed*, etc. I think the words may be better rendered and supplied thus, by observing what is according to thy word; which shows how a sinner is to be cleansed from his sins by the blood of Christ, and justified by his righteousness, and be clean through his word; and also how and by whom the work of sanctification is wrought in the heart, even by the Spirit of God, by means of

the word, and what is the rule of a man's walk and conversation: he will find the word of God to be profitable, to inform in the doctrines of justification and pardon, to acquaint him with the nature of regeneration and sanctification; and for the correction and amendment of his life and manners, and for his instruction in every branch of manners: 2 Timothy 3:16. John Gill, 1697-1771.

Verse 9. *By taking heed.* There is an especial necessity for this "Take heed," because of the proneness of a young man to thoughtlessness, carelessness, presumption, self confidence. There is an especial necessity for "taking heed," because of the difficulty of the way. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a narrow path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a new path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is a slippery path. "Look well to thy goings"; it is an eventful path. James Harrington Evans, 1785-1849.

Verse 9. *According to thy word.* God's word is the glass which discovereth all spiritual deformity, and also the water and soap which washes and scours it away. Paul Bayne.

Verse 9. *According to thy word.* I do not say that there are no other guides, no other fences. I do not say that conscience is worth nothing, and conscience in youth is especially sensitive and tender; I do not say that prayer is not a most valuable fence, but prayer without taking heed is only another name for presumption: prayer and carelessness can never walk hand in hand together; and I therefore say that there is no fence nor guard that can so effectually keep out every enemy as prayerful reading of the word of God, bringing every solicitation from the world or from companions, every suggestion from our own hearts and passions, to the test of God's word: -- What says the Bible? The answer of the Bible, with the teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, will in all the intricacies of our road be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Barton Bouchier.

Verse 9. *Thy word.* The word is the only weapon (like Goliath's sword, none to equal this), for the hewing down and cutting off of this stubborn enemy, our lusts. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their greatest pride: if ever lust rageth at one time more than another, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is giddy, and his lust is hot and impetuous: his sun is climbing higher still, and he thinks it is a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasure. The rigour of his strength affords him more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can expect, and he is farther from the fear of death's gunshot, as he thinks, than old men who are upon the very brink of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them, into which they are suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the word of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him fly in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from the feast when they saw Amnon their brother murdered at the table. When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts, how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in the waters of the word of God. William Gumall.

Verse 9. *The Scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying.* John Flavel, 1627-1691.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of The Psalm, by Pastor C. A. Davis

Verse 9-16. -- Sanctification by the word, declared generally (Psalms 119:9); sought personally (Psalms 119:10-12); published to others (Psalms 119:13); personally rejoiced in (Psalms 119:14-16).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 9. --

1. The young man's question.
2. The wise man's reply.

Verse 9. -- In the word of God, when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, there is,

1. A sufficiency of light to discover to men the need of cleansing their way.
2. Sufficiency of energy for the cleansing their way.
3. A sufficiency of pleasure to encourage them to choose to cleanse their way.
4. A sufficiency of support to sustain them in their cleansed way. -- Theophilus Jones, in a "Sermon to the Young," 1829.

Verse 9. The word of God provides for the cleansing of the way.

1. By pointing out to the young man the evil of the way.
2. By discovering an infallible remedy for the disorders of his nature -- the salvation that is by Jesus Christ.
3. By becoming a directory in all the paths of duty to which he may be called. -- Daniel Wilson, 1828.

Verse 9. -- The Psalmist's rules for the attainment of holiness deduced from his own experience.

1. Seek God with thy "whole heart" (Psalms 119:2). Be truly sensible of your wants.
 2. Keep and remember what God says (Psalms 119:11): "Thy word have I hidden," etc.
- Reduce all this to practice (Psalms 119:11): "That I might not sin against thee."
 - Bless God for what he has given (vet. 12): "Blessed art thou," etc.
 - Ask more (Psalms 119:12): Teach me thy statute,.
 - Be ready to communicate his knowledge to others (Psalms 119:13): "With my lips have I declared."
 - Let it have a due effect on thy own heart (Psalms 119:14): "I have rejoiced," etc.
 - Meditate frequently upon them (Psalms 119:15): "I will meditate," etc.
 - Deeply reflect on them (Psalms 119:16): "I will have respect," etc. As food undigested will not nourish the body, so the word of God not considered with deep meditation and reflection will not feed the soul.

□ Having pursued the above course he should continue in it, and then his happiness would be secured (Psalms 119:16): "I will not forget thy word: I will (in consequence) delight myself in thy statutes." --Adam Clarke.

Verse 9. -- A question and answer for the young. The Bible is a book for young people. Here it intimates,

1. That the young man's way needs to be cleansed. His way of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting.
2. That he must take an active part in the work. The efficient cause in the operation is God. Other good influences are also at work. But the young man must be in hearty and practical sympathy with the work.
3. That he must use the Bible for the purpose. This records facts, presents incitations, enjoins precepts, utters promises, and sets up examples, all which are adapted to make a young man holy. By reading, studying, and imitating the Scriptures in a lowly and prayerful spirit the young shall escape pollution and ornament society. --W.J.

Verse 9. -- A word to the young.

1. Show how the young man is in special danger of defiling his way. Through,
 - a. His strong passions.
 - (b) His immature judgment.
 - (c) His inexperience.
 - (d) His rash self sufficiency.
 - (e) His light companions, and,
 - (f) His general heedlessness.
 1. The circumspection he should use to cleanse his way. "Taking heed,"
 - (a) Of his evil propensities.
 - (b) Of his companions.
 - (c) Of his pursuits.
 - (d) Of the tendencies of all he does.
 1. The infallible guide by which his circumspection is to be regulated: "according to thy word" -- that is to say,
 - a. Its precepts.
 - (b) Its examples.
 - (c) Its motives.
 - (d) Its warnings.
 - (e) Its allurements. --C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee. His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person. This is a right royal search and pursuit, and well may it be followed with the whole heart. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God himself, and to endeavour to abide in fellowship with him. Up to the good hour in which he was speaking to his Lord, the Psalmist had been an eager seeker after the Lord, and if faint, he was still pursuing. Had he not sought the Lord he would never have been so anxious to cleanse his way.

It is pleasant to see how the writer's heart turns distinctly and directly to God. He had been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the presence of his God that he speaks to him, and prays to him as to one who is near. A true heart cannot long live without fellowship with God.

His petition is founded on his life's purpose: he is seeking the Lord, and he prays the Lord to prevent his going astray in or from his search. It is by obedience that we follow after God, hence the prayer, "O let me not wander from thy commandments; for if we leave the ways of God's appointment we certainly shall not find the God who appointed them. The more a man's whole heart is set upon holiness the more does he dread falling into sin; he is not so much fearful of deliberate transgression as of inadvertent wandering: he cannot endure a wandering look, or a rambling thought, which might stray beyond the pale of the precept. We are to be such wholehearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our wholeheartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness.

Two things may be very like and yet altogether different: saints are "strangers" -- "I am a stranger in the earth" (Psalms 119:19), but they are not wanderers: they are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct; they are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men; but yet they have not lost their way.

The man of God exerts himself, but does not trust himself: his heart is in his walking with God: but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them: hence the prayer, "O let me not wander." Still, this sense of need was never turned into an argument for idleness; for while he prayed to be kept in the right road he took care to run in it with his whole heart seeking the Lord.

It is curious again to note how the second part of the Psalm keeps step with the first; for where Psalms 119:2 pronounces that man to be blessed who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, the present verse claims the blessing by pleading the character: With my whole heart have I sought thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee.* There are very few of us that are able to say with the prophet David that we have sought God with our whole heart; to wit, with such integrity and pureness that we have not turned away from that mark as from the most principal thing of our salvation. John Calvin.

Verse 10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee.* Sincerity is in every expression; the heart is open before God. The young man can so speak to the Searcher of hearts... Let us consider the directness of this kind of converse with God. We use round about expressions in drawing nigh to God. We say, With my whole heart would I seek thee. We are afraid to be direct... See how decided in his conscious acting is the young man before you, how open and confiding he is, and such you will find to be the characteristic of his pious mind throughout the varied expressions unfolded in this Psalm. Here he declares to the Omniscient One that he had sought him with all his heart. He desired to realize God in everything. John Stephen.

Verse 10 (first clause). *God alone sees the heart; the heart alone sees God.* John Donne, 1573-1631.

Verse 10. *O let me not wander from thy commandments.* David after he had protested that he sought God with his whole heart, besought God that he would not suffer him to decline from his commandments. Hereby let us see what great need we have to call upon God, to the end he may hold us with a mighty strong hand. Yea, and though he hath already mightily put to his healing hand, and we also know that he hath bestowed upon us great and manifest graces; yet this is not all: for there are so many vices and imperfections in our nature, and we are so feeble and weak that we have very great need daily to pray unto him, yea, and that more and more, that he will not suffer us to decline from his commandments. John Calvin.

Verse 10. *The more experience a man hath in the ways of God,* the more sensible is he of his own readiness to wander insensibly, by ignorance and inadvertency, from the ways of God; but the young soldier dares run hazards, ride into his adversary's camp, and talk with temptation, being confident he cannot easily go wrong; he is not so much in fear as David who here cries, O let me not wander. David Dickson, 1583-1662.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 10. --

1. A grateful review.
2. An anxious forecast.
3. A commendable prayer.

Verse 10. -- The believer's two great solitudes.

1. What he is anxious to find: "I have sought thee."
2. What he is afraid of losing: "Thy commandments." --W. D.

Verse 10. -- Sincerity not self sufficiency.

1. The believer must be conscious of wholeheartedness in seeking God.
2. But consciousness of sincerity does not warrant self sufficiency.
3. The most wholehearted seeker must still look to divine grace to keep him from wandering.

--C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 11. When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart. His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God, -- all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. He did not wear a text on his heart as a charm, but he hid it in his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

That I might not sin against thee. Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said, -- Here is the best thing -- "thy word"; hidden in the best place, -- "in my heart;" for the best of purposes, -- "that I might not sin against thee." This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves, -- in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls.

A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee." He speaks to God, he loves the word because it is God's word, and he hates sin because it is sin against God himself. If he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word.

The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: "With my whole heart have I sought thee." Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was

after holiness: "That I might not sin against thee." This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done: many are great at promising, but the Psalmist had been true in performing: hence he hoped to see a sure result. When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin. The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Psalms 119:3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (Psalms 119:3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart piety founded on the Scriptures.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*, that I might not sin against thee. There laid up in the heart the word has effect. When young men only read the letter of the Book, the word of promise and instruction is deprived of much of its power. Neither will the laying of it up in the mere memory avail. The word must be known and prized, and laid up in the heart; it must occupy the affection as well as the understanding; the whole mind requires to be impregnated with the word of God. Revealed things require to be seen. Then the word of God in the heart -- the threatenings, the promises, the excellencies of God's word -- and God himself realized, the young man would be inwardly fortified; the understanding enlightened, conscience quickened -- he would not sin against his God. John Stephen.

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*, that I might not sin against thee. In proportion as the word of the King is present in the heart, "there is power" against sin (Ec 8:4). Let us use this means of absolute power more, and more life and more holiness will be ours. Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-1879.

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*. It is fit that the word, being "more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold," a peerless pearl, should not be laid up in the porter's lodge only -- the outward ear; but even in the cabinet of the mind. Dean Boys, quoted by James Ford.

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*. There is great difference between Christians and worldlings. The worldling hath his treasures in jewels without him; the Christian hath them within. Neither indeed is there any receptacle wherein to receive and keep the word of consolation but the heart only. If thou have it in thy mouth only, it shall be taken from thee; if thou have it in thy book only, Thou shalt miss it when thou hast most to do with it; but if thou lay it up in thy heart, as Mary did the words of the angel, no enemy shall ever be able to take it from thee, and thou shalt find it's comfortable treasure in time of thy need. William Cowper.

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart*. This saying, to hide, imports that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself and to make a glorious show before men; but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him. He never looked to worldly creatures; but being

content that he had so great a treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him would so surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away. Saint Paul also declareth unto us (1Ti 1:19) that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid is a good conscience. For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience have lost also their faith, and have been robbed thereof. As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in hazard, without shutting a door, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in and to rob and spoil him of all; even so, if we leave at random to Satan the treasures which God hath given us in his word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of, our heart as David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof. John Calvin.

Verse 11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart.* -- Remembered, approved, delighted in it. William Nicholson on (1671), in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."

Verse 11. *Thy word.* The saying, thy oracle; any communication from God to the soul, whether promise, or command, or answer. It means a direct and distinct message, while "word" is more general, and applies to the whole revelation. This is the ninth of the ten words referring to the revelation of God in this Psalm. James G. Murphy, 1875.

Verse 11. *In my heart.* Bernard observes, bodily bread in the cupboard may be eaten of mice, or moulder and waste: but when it is taken down into the body, it is free from such danger. If God enable thee to take thy soul food into thine heart, it is free from all hazards. George Swinnock, 1627-1673.

Verse 11. *That I might not sin against thee.* Among many excellent virtues of the word of God, this is one: that if we keep it in our heart, it keeps us from sin, which is against God and against ourselves. We may mark it by experience, that the word is first stolen either out of the mind of man, and the remembrance of it is away; or at least out of the affection of man; so that the reverence of it is gone, before that a man can be drawn to the committing of a sin. So long as Eve kept by faith the word of the Lord, she resisted Satan; but from the time she doubted of that, which God made most certain by his word, at once she was snared. William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 11. -- The best thing, in the best place, for the best of purposes.

EXPOSITION

Verse 12. Blessed art thou, O LORD. These are words of adoration arising out of an intense admiration of the divine character, which the writer is humbly aiming to imitate. He blesses God for all that he has revealed to him, and wrought in him; he praises him with warmth of reverent love, and depth of holy wonder. These are also words of perception uttered from a remembrance of the great Jehovah's infinite happiness within himself. The Lord is and must be blessed, for he is the perfection of holiness; and this is probably the reason why this is used as a plea in this place. It is as if David

had said -- I see that in conformity to thyself my way to happiness must lie, for thou art supremely blessed; and if I am made in my measure like to thee in holiness, I shall also partake in thy blessedness.

No sooner is the word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the word is received into the soul, the first prayer is -- Lord, teach me its meaning.

Teach me thy statutes; for thus only can I learn the way to be blessed. Thou art so blessed that I am sure thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of thee that. I may be instructed in thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to whom he made supplication. Lord, thou art blessed, therefore bless me by teaching me.

We need to be disciples or learners -- "teach me;" but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is David to beg the blessed God to teach him! Yet the Lord put the desire into his heart when the sacred word was hidden there, and so we may be sure that he was not too bold in expressing it. Who would not wish to enter the school of such a Master to learn of him the art of holy living? To this Instructor we must submit ourselves if we would practically keep the statutes of righteousness. The King who ordained the statutes knows best their meaning, and as they are the outcome of his own nature he can best inspire us with their spirit. The petition commends itself to all who wish to cleanse their way, since it is most practical, and asks for teaching, not upon recondite lore, but upon statute law. If we know the Lord's statutes we have the most essential education.

Let us each one say, "Teach me thy statutes." This is a sweet prayer for everyday use. It is a step above that of [Psalms 119:10](#), "O let me not wander," as that was a rise beyond that of [Psalms 119:8](#), "O forsake me not utterly." It finds its answer in [Psalms 119:98-100](#): "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies," etc.: but not till it had been repeated even to the third time in the "Teach me" of [Psalms 119:33,66](#), all of which I beg my reader to peruse. Even after this third pleading the prayer occurs again in so many words in [Psalms 119:124,139](#), and the same longing conics out near the close of the Psalm in [Psalms 119:171](#) -- "My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 12. *Blessed art thou*, O Lord: teach me thy statutes. This verse contains a prayer, with the reason of the prayer. The prayer is, "Teach me thy statutes"; the reason, moving him to seek this, ariseth of a consideration of that infinite good which is in God. He is a blessed God, the fountain of all felicity, without whom no welfare or happiness can be to the creature. And for this cause David earnestly desiring to be in fellowship and communion with God, which he knows none can attain unto

unless he be taught of God to know God's way and walk in it; therefore, I say, he prayeth the more earnestly that the Lord would teach him his statutes. Oh that we also could wisely consider this, that our felicity stands in fellowship with God. William Cowper.

Verse 12. *In this verse we have two things,*

1. An acknowledgment of God's blessedness, Blessed art thou, O LORD; i.e., being possessed of all fulness, thou hast an infinite complacency in the enjoyment of thyself; and thou art he alone in the enjoyment of whom I can be blessed and happy; and thou art willing and ready to give out of thy fulness, so that thou art the fountain of blessedness to thy creatures.
2. A request or petition, Teach me thy statutes; q.d., seeing thou hast all fulness in thyself, and art sufficient to thy own blessedness; surely thou hast enough for me. There is enough to content thyself, therefore enough to satisfy me. This encourages me in my address.

Again, -- Teach me that I may know wherein to seek my blessedness and happiness, even in thy blessed self; and that I may know how to come by the enjoyment of thee, so that I may be blessed in thee. Further, -- Thou art blessed originally, the Fountain of all blessing; thy blessedness is an everlasting fountain, a full fountain; always pouring out blessedness: O, let me have this blessing from thee, this drop from the fountain. William Wisheart, in "Theologia, or, Discourses of God," 1716.

Verse 12. *Since God is blessed,* we cannot but desire to learn his ways. If we see any earthly being happy, we have a great desire to learn out his course, as thinking by it we might be happy also. Every one would sail with that man's wind who prospereth; though in earthly things it holdeth not alway: yet a blessed God cannot by any way of his bring to other than blessedness. Thus, he who is blessedness itself, he will be ready to communicate his ways to other: the most excellent things are most communicative. Paul Bayne.

Verse 12. *Teach me.* He had Nathan, he had priests to instruct him, himself was a prophet; but all their teaching was nothing without God's blessing, and therefore he prays, "Teach me." William Nicholson.

Verse 12. *Teach me.* These words convey more than the simple imparting of knowledge, for he said before he had such, when he said he hid God's words in his heart; and in Ps 119:7 he said he "had learned the judgments of his justice": it includes grace to observe his law. Robert Bellarmine, 1542-1621.

Verse 12. *Teach me.* If this were practised now, to join prayer with hearing, that when we offer ourselves to be taught of men, we would there with send up prayer to God, before preaching, in time of preaching and after preaching, we would soon prove more learned and religious than we are. William Cowper.

Verse 12. *Teach me thy statutes.* Whoever reads this Psalm with attention must observe in it one great characteristic, and that is, how decisive are its statements that in keeping the commandments

of God nothing can be done by human strength; but that it is he who must create the will for the performance of such duty. The Psalmist entreats the Lord to open his eyes that he may behold the wondrous things of the law, to teach him his statutes, to remove from him the way of lying, to incline his heart unto his testimonies, and not to covetousness, to turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth. Each of these petitions shows how deeply impressed he was of his entire helplessness as regarded himself, and how completely dependent upon God he felt himself for any advancement he could hope to make in the knowledge of the truth. All his studies in the divine law, all his aspirations after holiness of life, he was well assured could never meet with any measure of success, except by the grace of God preventing and cooperating, implanting in him a right desire, and acting as an infallible guide, whereby alone he would be enabled to arrive at the proper sense of Holy Scripture, as well as to correct principles of action in his daily walk before God and man. George Phillips, 1846.

Verse 12. *Teach me thy statutes.* If it be asked why the Psalmist entreats to be taught, when he has just before been declaring his knowledge, the answer is that he seeks instruction as to the practical working of those principles which he has learnt theoretically. Michael Ayguan (1416), in Neale and Littledale.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 12. -- The blessedness of God, and the mode of entering into it.

Verse 12. --

1. David gives glory to God: "Blessed art thou, O LORD."
2. He asks grace from God. --Matthew Henry.

Verse 12. --

1. What it is, or how God doth teach us.

(a) God doth teach us outwardly; by his ordinances, by the ministry of men.

(b) Inwardly; by the inspiration and work of the Holy Ghost.

1. The necessity of his teaching.
2. The benefit and utility of it. --T. Manton.

Verse 12. -- Desire for Divine Teaching excited by the Recognition of Divine Blessedness.

1. Unveil in some inadequate degree the happiness of the ever blessed God, arising from his purity, benevolence, love.
2. Show the way in which man may become partaker of that blessedness by conformity to his precepts.
3. Utter the prayer of the text. --C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. The taught one of Psalms 119:12 is here a teacher himself. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops. So had the Psalmist done. As much as he had known he had spoken. God has revealed many of his judgments by his mouth, that is to say, by a plain and open revelation; these it is our duty to repeat, becoming, as it were, so many exact echoes of his one infallible voice. There are judgments of God which are a great deep, which he does not reveal, and with these it will be wise for us not to intermeddle. What the Lord has veiled it would be presumption for us to uncover; but, on the other hand, what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to conceal. It is a great comfort to a Christian in time of trouble when in looking back upon his past life he can claim to have done his duty by the word of God. To have been, like Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is a great joy when the floods are rising, and the ungodly world is about to be destroyed. Lips which have been used in proclaiming God's statutes are sure to be acceptable when pleading God's promises. If we have had such regard to that which cometh out of God's mouth that we have published it far and wide, we may rest quite as assured that God will have respect unto the prayers which come out of our mouths.

It will be an effectual method of cleansing a young man's way if he addicts himself continually to preaching the gospel. He cannot go far wrong in judgment whose whole soul is occupied in setting forth the judgments of the Lord. By teaching we learn; by training the tongue to holy speech we master the whole body; by familiarity with the divine procedure we are made to delight in righteousness; and thus in a threefold manner our way is cleansed by our proclaiming the way of the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 13. *With my lips have I declared*, etc. Above all, be careful to talk of that to others which you do daily learn yourself, and out of the abundance of your heart speak of good things unto men. Richard Greenham.

Verse 13. *Having hid the purifying word in his heart*, the Psalmist will declare it with his lips; and as it is so pure throughout, he will declare all in it, without exception. When the fountain of the heart is purified, the streams from the lips will be pure also. The declaring lips of the Psalmist are here placed in antithesis to the mouth of Jehovah, by which the judgments were originally pronounced. F. G. Marchant.

Verse 13. *As the consciousness of having communicated our knowledge and our spiritual gifts is a means of encouragement to seek a greater measure*, so it is an evidence of the sincerity and fruitfulness of what knowledge we have: Teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. David Dickson.

Verse 13. *With my lips*, etc. The tongue is a most excellent member of the body, being well used to the glory of God and the edification of others; and yet it cannot pronounce without help of the lips. The Lord hath made the body of man with such marvellous wisdom, that no member of it can say to another, I have no need of thee; but such is man's dulness, that he observes not how useful unto him is the smallest member in the body, till it be taken from him. If our lips were clasped for a time, and our tongue thus shut up, we would esteem it a great mercy to have it loosed again; as that cripple, when he found the use of his feet, leaped for joy and glorified God. William Cowper.

Verse 13. *Declared all the judgments.* He says in another place ([Psalms 36:6](#)), "Thy judgments are like a great deep." As the apostle says ([Romans 11:33-34](#)), "O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord?" If the judgments are unsearchable, how then says the prophet, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth"? We answer, -- peradventure there are judgments of God which are not the judgments of his mouth, but of his heart and hand only.

We make a distinction, for we have no fear that the sacred Scripture weakens itself by contradictions. It has not said, The judgments of his mouth are a great deep; but "Thy judgments." Neither has the apostle said, The unsearchable judgments of his mouth: but "His unsearchable judgments." We may regard the judgments of God, then, as those hidden ones which he has not revealed to us; but the judgments of his mouth, those which he has made known, and has spoken by the mouth of the prophets. Ambrose, 340-397.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 13. -- Speech fitly employed. It is occupied with a choice subject, a full subject, a subject profitable to men, and glorifying to God.

EXPOSITION

Verse 14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies. Delight in the word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, and so is cleansing the life. The Psalmist not only says that he does rejoice, but that he has rejoiced. For years it had been his joy and bliss to give his soul to the teaching of the word. His rejoicing had not only arisen out of the word of God, but out of the practical characteristics of it. The Way was as dear to him as the Truth and the Life. There was no picking and choosing with David, or if indeed he did make a selection, he chose the most practical first.

As much as in all riches. He compared his intense satisfaction with God's will with that of a man who possesses large and varied estates, and the heart to enjoy them. David knew the riches that come of sovereignty and which grow out of conquest; he valued the wealth which proceeds from labour, or is gotten by inheritance: he knew "all riches." The gracious king had been glad to see the gold and silver poured into his treasury that he might devote vast masses of it to the building of the Temple of

Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He rejoiced in all sorts of riches consecrated and laid up for the noblest uses, and yet the way of God's word had given him more pleasure than even these. Observe that his joy was personal, distinct, remembered, and abundant. Wonder not that in the previous verse he glories in having spoken much of that which he had so much enjoyed: a man may well talk of that which is his delight.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 14. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies*, etc. The Psalmist saith not only, "I have rejoiced in thy testimonies," but, "in the way of thy testimonies." Way is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, "the way which thy testimonies point out, and call me unto"; or else his own practice, as a man's course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: "in the way of thy testimonies." He tells us the degree of his joy, as much as in all riches: "as much," not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but "as much," because we have no higher comparison. This is that which worldlings dote upon, and delight in; now as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare his own delight in the word, with his own delight in wealth; but his own choice and delight, with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David who was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, land, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and all men severally do possess; yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" ([Mark 8:36](#)). Thomas Manton.

Verse 14. *The way of thy testimonies*. The testimony of God is his word, for it testifies his will; the "way" of his testimony is the practice of his word, and doing of that which he hath declared to be his will, and wherein he hath promised to show us his love. David found not this sweetness in hearing, reading, and professing the word only; but in practising of it: and in very deed, the only cause why we find not the comfort that is in the word of God is that we practise it not by walking in the way thereof. It is true, at the first it is bitter to nature, which loves carnal liberty, to render itself as captive to the word: *laboriosa virtutis via*, and much pains must be taken before the heart be subdued; but when it is once begun, it renders such joy as abundantly recompenses all the former labour and grief. William Cowper.

Verse 14. *Riches are acquired with difficulty*, enjoyed with trembling, and lost with bitterness. Bernard, 1091-1157.

Verse 14. A poor, good woman said, in time of persecution, when they took away the Christian's Bibles, "I cannot part with my Bible; I know not how to live without it." When a gracious soul has heard

a profitable sermon, he says, "Methinks it does me good at heart; it is the greatest nourishment I have": I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. Oliver Heywood, 1629-1702.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 14. -- Practical religion, the source of a comfort surpassing riches. It gives a man ease of mind, independence of carriage, weight of influence, and other matters supposed to arise out of wealth.

Verse 14. --

1. The subject of rejoicing. Not the "testimonies" merely, but their observances, "the way of," etc.
- 2.. The rejoicing in that subject.

(a) In its inward peace.

(b) In its external consequences.

1. The degree of the rejoicing: "as much as," etc. --G.R.

Verse 14. -- The two scales of the balance. Whatever riches are good for, God's testimonies are good for.

1. Riches are desirable as the means of procuring the necessaries of life; but God's testimonies supply the necessities of the soul.
2. Riches are desirable as a means of procuring personal enjoyment; but God's testimonies produce the highest joy.
3. Riches are desirable as a means of attaining personal improvement; but God's testimonies are the highest educators.
4. Riches are desirable as a means of doing good; but God's testimonies work the highest good.
--C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 15. I will meditate in thy precepts. He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. As the miser often returns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced," is the same who adds, "I will meditate." No spiritual exercise is more profitable to the soul than that of devout meditation; why are many of us so exceeding slack in it? It is worthy of observation that the preceptory part of God's word was David's special subject of meditation, and this was the more natural because the question was still upon his mind as to how a young man should cleanse his way. Practical godliness is vital godliness.

And have respect unto thy ways, that is to say, I will think much about them so as to know what thy ways are; and next; I will think much of them so as to have thy ways in great reverence and high

esteem. I will see what thy ways are towards me that I may be filled with reverence, gratitude, and love; and then I will observe what are those ways which thou hast prescribed for me, thy ways in which thou wouldest have me follow thee; these I would watch carefully that I may become obedient, and prove myself to be a true servant of such a Master.

Note how the verses grow more inward as they proceed: from the speech of Psalms 119:13 we advanced to the manifested joy of Psalms 119:14, and now we come to the secret meditation of the happy spirit. The richest graces are those which dwell deepest.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 15. *I will meditate in thy precepts*, etc. All along David had shown what he had done; now, what he will do. Psalms 119:10, "I have sought"; Psalms 119:11, "I have hid"; Ps 119:12, "I have declared"; Psalms 119:14, "I have rejoiced." Now in the two following verses he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come. "I will meditate in thy precepts," etc. We do not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose, to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build, and leave unfinished, is an argument of folly. Thomas Manton.

Verse 15. *I will meditate in thy precepts*. Not only of thy precepts or concerning them, but in them, while engaged in doing them. Joseph Addison Alexander.

Verse 15. *I will*. See this "I will" repeated again and again (Psalms 119:48,78). In meditation it is hard (sometimes at least) to take off our thoughts from the pre-engagements of other subjects, and apply them to the duty. But it is harder to become duly serious in acting in it, harder yet to dive and ponder; and hardest of all to continue in an abode of thoughts, and dwell long enough, and after views to make reviews, to react the same thinking, to taste things over and over, when the freshness and newness is past, when by long thinking the things before us seem old. We are ready to grow dead and flat in a performance except we stir up ourselves often in it. It is hard to hold on and hold up, unless we hold up a wakeful eye, a warm affection, a strong and quick repeated resolution; yea, and without often lifting up the soul to Christ for fresh recruits of strength to hold on. David, that so excellent artist in this way, saith he will meditate, he often saith he will. Doubtless, he not only said "I will" when he was to make his entrance into this hard work; but likewise for continuance in it, to keep up his heart from flagging, till he well ended his work. It is not the digging into the golden mine, but the digging long, that finds and fetches up the treasure. It is not the diving into the sea, but staying longer, that gets the greater quantity of pearls. To draw out the golden thread of meditation to its due length till the spiritual ends be attained, this is a rare and happy attainment. Nathanael Ranew, 1670.

Verse 15. *I will meditate*. How much our "rejoicing in the testimonies" of God would be increased by a more habitual meditation upon them! This is, however, a resolution which the carnal mind can never

be brought to make, and to which the renewed mind through remaining depravity is often sadly reluctant. But it is a blessed employment, and will repay a thousand fold the difficulty of engaging the too backward heart in the duty. Charles Bridges.

Verse 15. *Meditation is of that happy influence*, it makes the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and the conversation greatly fruitful. Nathanael Ranew.

Verse 15. *Meditate in*, thy precepts. Study the Scriptures. If a famous man do but write an excellent book, O how we do long to see it! Or suppose I could tell you that there is in France or Germany a book that God himself wrote, I am confident men may draw all the money out of your purses to get that book. You have it by you: O that you would study it! When the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was studying the prophet Isaiah. He was not angry when Philip came and, as we would have thought, asked him a bold question: "Understandest thou what thou readeest?" ([Acts 8:27-30](#)); he was glad of it. One great end of the year of release was, that the law might be read ([Deuteronomy 31:9-13](#)). It is the wisdom of God that speaks in the Scripture ([Luke 11:49](#)); therefore, whatever else you mind, really and carefully study the Bible. Samuel Jacomb (1629-1659), in *The Morning Exercises*.

Verse 15. *I will have respect*. The one is the fruit of the other: "I will meditate"; and then, "I will have respect." Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: "Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" ([Joshua 1:8](#)). Thomas Manton.

Verse 15. *And have respect unto thy ways*. -- As an archer hath to his mark. John Trapp.

Verse 15. *Respect unto thy ways*. It is not without a peculiar pleasure, when travelling, that we contemplate the splendid buildings, the gardens, the fortifications, or the fine art galleries. But what are all these sights to the contemplation of the ways of God, which he himself has traversed, or has marked out for man? And what practical need there is that we consider the way, for else we shall be as a sleepy coachman, not carefully observant of the road, who may soon upset himself and his passengers. Martin Geier.

Verse 15. *Thy ways*. David's second internal action concerning the word is consideration; where mark well, how by a most proper speech he calls the word of God the ways of God; partly, because by it God comes near unto men, revealing himself to them, who otherwise could not be known of them; for he dwells in light inaccessible; and partly, because the word is the way which leads men to God. So then, because by it God cometh down to men, and by it men go up unto God, and know how to get access to him, therefore is his word called his way. William Cowper.

Verse 15-16. *The two last verses of this section present to us a threefold internal action of David's soul toward the word of God; first, meditation; secondly, consideration; thirdly, delectation: every one*

of these proceeds from another, and they mutually strengthen one another. Meditation brings the word to the mind; consideration views it and looks at length into it, whereof is bred delectation. That which comes into the mind, were it never so good, if it be not considered, goes as it came, leaving neither instruction nor joy; but being once presented by meditation, if it be pondered by consideration, then it breeds delectation, which is the perfection of godliness, in regard of the internal action. William Cowper.

EXPOSITION

Verse 16. I will delight myself in thy statutes. In this verse delight follows meditation, of which it is the true flower and outgrowth. When we have no other solace, but are quite alone, it will be a glad thing for the heart to turn upon itself, and sweetly whisper, "I will delight myself. What if no minstrel sings in the hall, I will delight myself. If the time of the singing of birds has not yet arrived, and the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet I will delight myself." This is the choicest and noblest of all rejoicing; in fact, it is the good part which can never be taken from us; but there is no delighting ourselves with anything below that which God intended to be the soul's eternal satisfaction. The statute book is intended to be the joy of every loyal subject. When the believer once peruses the sacred pages his soul burns within him as he turns first to one and then to another of the royal words of the great King, words full and firm, immutable and divine.

I will not forget thy word. Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on (Psalms 119:15), and that which they have often spoken of (Psalms 119:13). Yet since we have treacherous memories it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of "I will not forget."

Note how two "I wills" follow upon two "I haves." We may not promise for the future if we have altogether failed in the past; but where grace has enabled us to accomplish something, we may hopefully expect that it will enable us to do more.

It is curious to observe how this verse is moulded upon Psalms 119:8: the changes are rung on the same words, but the meaning is quite different, and there is no suspicion of a vain repetition. The same thought is never given over again in this Psalm; they are dullards who think so. Something in the position of each verse affects its meaning, so that even where its words are almost identical with those of another the sense is delightfully varied. If we do not see an infinite variety of fine shades of thought in this Psalm we may conclude that we are colour blind; if we do not hear many sweet harmonies, we may judge our ears to be dull of hearing, but we may not suspect the Spirit of God of monotony.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Verse 16. *I will delight myself*, etc. He protested before that he had great delight in the testimonies of

God: now he saith he will still delight in them. A man truly godly, the more good he doth, the more he desires, delights and resolves to do. Temporisers, on the contrary, who have but a show of godliness, and the love of it is not rooted in their heart, how soon are they weary of well doing! If they have done any small external duty of religion, they rest as if they were fully satisfied, and there needed no more good to be done by them. True religion is known by hungering and thirsting after righteousness, by perseverance in well doing, and an earnest desire to do more.

But to this he adds that he will not forget the word. The graces of the Spirit do every one fortify and strengthen another; for ye see meditation helps consideration. Who can consider of that whereof he thinks not? Consideration again breeds delectation; and as here ye see, delectation strengthens memory: because he delights in the word he will not forget the word; and memory again renews meditation. Thus every grace of the Spirit helps another; and by the contrary, one of them neglected, works a wonderful decay of the remnant. William Cowper.

Verse 16 I will delight myself When righteousness, from a matter of constraint becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. *The same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of his own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster; but obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the God of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence. Thomas Chalmers, 1780-1847.*

Verse 16. *Meditation must not be a dull, sad, and dispirited thing: not a driving like the chariots of the Egyptians when their wheels were taken off, but like the chariots of Amminadib (Song of Solomon 6:12) that ran swiftly. So let us pray, -- Lord, in meditation make me like the chariots of Amminadib, that my swift running may evidence my delight in meditating. Holy David makes delight such an ingredient or assistant here, that sometimes he calls the exercise of meditation by the name of "delight," speaking in the foregoing verse of this meditation, "I will meditate of thy precepts," and in Psalms 119:16, I will delight myself in thy statutes; which is the same with meditation, only with superadding the excellent qualification due meditation should have; the name of delight is given to meditation because of its noble concomitant -- holy joy and satisfaction. Nathanael Ranew.*

Verse 16. *Delight myself.* The word is very emphatic: [f[tfa, eshtaasha, I will skip about and jump for joy. Adam Clarke.

Verse 16. *I will not forget.* Delight prevents forgetfulness: the mind will run upon that which the heart delighteth in; and the heart is where the treasure is (Matthew 6:21). Worldly men that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word, because it is not their delight. If anything displeases us, we are glad

if we can forget it; it is some release from an inconvenience, to take off our thoughts from it; but it doubles the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in, to remember it, and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, hath no delight in his book, all that he learns is lost and forgotten, it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other: but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word. Thomas Manton.

Verse 16. *Forget.* I never yet heard of a covetous old man, who had forgotten where he had buried his treasure. Cicero de Senectute.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 16. --

1. What there is to be delighted in.
2. What comes of such delight: "I will never forget."
3. What comes of such memory -- more delight.

EXPOSITION

Verse 17-24. In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist's mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case. As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy's country. His appeal is to God alone, and his prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

Verse 17. Deal bountifully with thy servant. He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward. Let my wage be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service. The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger,. If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God's grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, "O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn."

That I may live. Without abundant mercy he could not live. It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are. Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord's bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. The Lord's servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.

And keep thy word. This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life. We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God's word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well being. Life is only worth keeping while we can keep God's word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live.

The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands. If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace. We work for him because he works in us. Thus we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this Psalm: [Psalms 119:1](#) blesses the holy man, [Psalms 119:9](#) asks how we can attain to such holiness, and [Psalms 119:17](#) traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing. The more a man prizes holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 17. *Deal bountifully with thy servant*, etc. These words might be -- Render unto thy servant, or upon thy servant. A deep signification seems to be here involved. The holy man will take the responsibility of being dealt with, not certainly as a mere sinful man, but as a man placing himself in the way appointed for reconciliation. Such we find to be the actual case, as you read in [Psalms 119:16](#), in the Part immediately preceding -- "I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." Now, the statutes of the Lord referred preeminently to the sacrifices for sin, and the cleansing for purifications that were prescribed in the Law. You have to conceive of the man of God as being in the midst of the Levitical ritual, for which you find him making all preparations: 1 Chronicles 22-24. Placing himself, therefore, upon these, he would pray the Lord to deal with him according to them; or, as we, in New Testament language, would say, -- placing himself on the great atonement, the believer would pray the Lord to deal with him according to his standing in Christ, which would be in graciousness or bounty. For if the Lord be just to condemn without the atonement, he is also just to pardon through the atonement; yea, he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. John

Stephen.

Verse 17. *Deal bountifully*, etc. O Lord, I am constantly resolved to obey and adhere to thy known will all the days of my life: O make me those gracious returns which thou hast promised to all such. Henry Hammond.

Verse 17. *Deal bountifully*... that I may keep thy word, etc. A faithful servant should count his by past service richly rewarded by being employed yet more in further service, as this prayer teacheth; for David entreats that he may live and keep God's word. David Dickson.

Verse 17. *Bountifully*. And indeed, remembering what a poor, weak, empty, and helpless creature the most experienced believer is in himself, it is not to be conceived that anything short of a bountiful supply of grace can answer the emergency. Charles Bridges.

Verse 17. *Thy servant*. That he styles himself so frequently the servant of God notes the reverent estimation he had of his God, in that he accounts it more honourable to be called the servant of God who was above him than the king of a mighty, ancient, and most famous people that were under him. And indeed, since the angels are styled his ministers, shall men think it a shame to serve him? and especially since he of his goodness hath made them our servants, "ministering spirits" to us? Should we not joyfully serve him who hath made all his creatures to serve us, and exempted us from the service of all other, and hath only bound us to serve himself? William Cowper.

Verse 17. *That I may live*. As a man must "live" in order to work, the first petition is, that God would "deal with his servant," according to the measure of grace and mercy, enabling him to "live" the life of faith, and strengthening him by the Spirit of might in the inner man. George Horne, 1730-1792.

Verse 17. *That I may live*, and keep thy word. David joins here two together, which whosoever disjoins cannot be blessed. He desires to live; but so to live that he may keep God's word. To a reprobate man, who lives a rebel to his Maker, it had been good (as our Saviour said of Judas) that he had never been born. The shorter his life is, the fewer are his sins and the smaller his judgments. But to an elect man, life is a great benefit; for by it he goes from election to glorification, by the way of sanctification. The longer he lives, the more good he doth, to the glory of God, the edification of others, and confirmation of his own salvation; making it sure to himself by wrestling and victory in temptations, and perseverance in well doing. William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verse 17-24. -- Divine bounties desired. Life, for godly service ([Psalms 119:17](#)). Illumination ([Psalms 119:18](#)). Guidance homeward for the stranger ("thy commandments") ([Psalms 119:19-20](#)), and, glancing at the proud who err from this guidance ([Psalms 119:21](#)), the Psalmist prays for removal of the "reproach" entailed by fidelity to God ([Psalms 119:22-24](#)).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 17. --

1. A bountiful master.
2. A needy servant -- begging for very life.
3. A suitable recompense: "and keep thy word."

Verse 17. -- We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy.
2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. --Matthew Henry.

EXPOSITION

Verse 18. Open thou mine eyes. This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty.

That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given.

The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men among the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness!

The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes"; but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge.

David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to [Psalms 119:10](#), which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander," and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there,

too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 18. *Open thou mine eyes.* Who is able to know the secret and hidden things of the Scriptures unless Christ opens his eyes? Certainly, no one; for "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Wherefore, as suppliants, we draw near to him, saying, "Open thou mine eyes," etc. The words of God cannot be kept except they be known; neither can they be known unless the eyes shall be opened, - - hence it is written, "That I may live and keep thy word"; and then, "Open thou mine eyes." Paulus Palanterius.

Verse 18. *Open thou mine eyes.* "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" was the gracious inquiry of the loving Jesus to a poor longing one on earth. "Lord! that I may receive my sight," was the instant answer. So here, in the same spirit, and to the same compassionate and loving Lord, does the Psalmist pray, "Open thou mine eyes"; and both in this and the preceding petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant," we see at once who prompted the prayer. Barton Bouchier.

Verse 18. *Open thou mine eyes.* If it be asked, seeing David was a regenerate man, and so illumined already, how is it that he prays for the opening of his eyes? The answer is easy: that our regeneration is wrought by degrees. The beginnings of light in his mind made him long for more; for no man can account of sense, but he who hath it. The light which he had caused him to see his own darkness; and therefore, feeling his wants, he sought to have them supplied by the Lord. William Cowper.

Verse 18. *Open thou mine eyes.* The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord make a plainer law, but, Lord open mine eyes: blind men might as well complain of God, that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is "a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). There is no want of light in the Scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit, and divine light, they do not give you mysteria, but monstra, portentous opinions; they do not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

The Hebrew phrase signifieth "unveil mine eyes." There is a double work, negative and positive.

There is a taking away of the veil, and an infusion of light. Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: "Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" ([Acts 9:18](#)). First, the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight. Thomas Manton.

Verse 18. *The Psalmist asks for no new revelation.* It was in God's hand to give this, and he did it in his own time to those ancient believers; but to all of them at every time there was enough given for the purposes of life. The request is not for more, but that he may employ well that which he possesses. Still better does such a form of request suit us, to whom life and immortality have been brought to light in Christ. If we do not find sufficient to exercise our thoughts with constant freshness, and our soul with the grandest and most attractive subjects, it is because we want the eye sight. It is of great importance for us to be persuaded of this truth, that there are many things in the Bible still to be found out, and that, if we come in the right spirit, we may be made discoverers of some of them. These things disclose themselves, not so much to learning, though that is not to be despised, as to spiritual sight, to a humble, loving heart.

And this at least is certain, that we shall always find things that are new to ourselves. However frequently we traverse the field, we shall perceive some fresh golden vein turning up its glance to us, and we shall wonder how our eyes were formerly holden that we did not see it. It was all there waiting for us, and we feel that more is waiting, if we had the vision. There is a great Spirit in it that holds deeper and even deeper converse with our souls.

This further may be observed, that the Psalmist asks for no new faculty. The eyes are there already, and they need only to be opened. It is not the bestowal of a new and supernatural power which enables a man to read the Bible to profit, but the quickening of a power he already possesses. In one view it is supernatural, as God is the Author of the illumination by a direct act of his Spirit; in another it is natural, as it operates through the faculties existing in a man's soul. God gives "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of man's understanding may be enlightened." ([Eph 1:17](#)) It is important to remember this also, for here lies our responsibility, that we have the faculty, and here also is the point at which we must begin action with the help of God. A man will never grow into the knowledge of God's word by idly waiting for some new gift of discernment, but by diligently using that which God has already bestowed upon him, and using at the same time all other helps that lie within his reach. There are men and books that seem, beyond others, to have the power of aiding insight. All of us have felt it in the contact of some affinity of nature which makes them our best helpers; the kindred clay upon the eyes by which the great Enlightener removes our blindness ([John 9:6](#)). Let us seek for such, and if we find them let us employ them without leaning on them. Above all, let us give our whole mind in patient, loving study to the book itself, and where we fail, at any essential part, God will either send his evangelist Philip to our aid ([Acts 8:26-40](#)) or instruct us

himself. But it is only by patient, loving study that help is given. God could have poured all knowledge into us by easy inspiration, but it is by earnest search alone that it can become the treasure of the soul.

But if so, it may still be asked what is the meaning of this prayer, and why does the Bible itself insist so often on the indispensable need of the Spirit of God to teach? Now there is a side here as true as the other, and in no way inconsistent with it. If prayer without effort would be presumptuous, effort without prayer would be vain. The great reason why men do not feel the power and beauty of the Bible is a spiritual one. They do not realize the grand evil which the Bible has come to cure, and they have not a heart to the blessings which it offers to bestow. The film of a fallen nature, self-maintained, is upon their eyes while they read: "The eyes of their understanding are darkened, being alienated from the life of God" ([Ephesians 4:18](#)). All the natural powers will never find the true key to the Bible, till the thoughts of sin and redemption enter the heart, and are put in the centre of the Book. It is the part of the Father of lights, by the teaching of his Spirit, to give this to the soul, and he will, if it humbly approaches him with this request. Thus we shall study as one might a book with the author at hand, to set forth the height of his argument, or as one might look on a noble composition, when the artist breathes into us a portion of his soul, to let us feel the centre of its harmonies of form and colour. Those who have given to the Bible thought and prayer will own that these are not empty promises. John Ker, in a Sermon entitled, "God's Word Suited to Man's Sense of Wonder," 1877.

Verse 18. *O let us never forget; that the wonderful things contained in the divine law can neither be discovered nor relished by the "natural man," whose powers of perception and enjoyment are limited in their range to the objects of time and sense. It is the divine Spirit alone who can lighten the darkness of our sinful state, and who can enable us to perceive the glory, the harmony, and moral loveliness which everywhere shine forth in the pages of revealed truth.* John Morison, 1829.

Verse 18. *Uncover my eyes and I will look -- wonders out of thy law.* The last clause is a kind of exclamation after his eyes have been uncovered. This figure is often used to denote inspiration or a special divine communication. "Out of thy law," i.e., brought out to view, as if from a place of concealment. Joseph Addison Alexander.

Verse 18. *Wondrous things.* Many were the signs and miracles which God wrought in the midst of the people of Israel, which they did not understand. What was the reason? Moses tells us expressly what it was: "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" ([Deuteronomy 29:4](#)). They had sensitive eyes and ears, yea, they had a rational heart or mind; but they wanted a spiritual ear to hear, a spiritual heart or mind to apprehend and improve those wonderful works of God; and these they had not, because God had not given them such eyes, ears, and hearts. Wonders without grace cannot open the eyes fully; but grace without wonders can. And as man hath not an eye to see the wonderful works of God spiritually, until it is given; so, much

less hath he an eye to see the wonders of the word of God till it be given him from above; and therefore David prays, Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And if the wondrous things of the law are not much seen till God give an eye, then much less are the wondrous things of the Gospel. The light of nature shows us somewhat of the Law; but nothing of the Gospel was ever seen by the light of nature. Many who have seen and admired some excellencies in the Law could never see, and therefore have derided, that which is the excellency of the Gospel, till God had opened their heart to understand. Joseph Caryl, 1602-1673.

Verse 18. *"The word is very nigh" unto us; and,* holding in our hand a document that teems with what is wonderful, the sole question is, "Have we an eye to its marvels, a heart for its mercies?" Here is the precise use of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit puts nothing new into the Bible; he only so enlightens and strengthens our faculties, that we can discern and admire what is there already. It is not the telescope which draws out that rich sparkling of stars on the blue space, which to the naked eye seem points of light, and untenanted: it is not the microscope which condenses the business of a stirring population into the circumference of a drop of water, and clothes with a thousand tints the scarcely discernible wing of the ephemeral insect. The stars are shining in their glory, whether or no we have the instruments to penetrate the azure; and the tiny tenantry are carrying on their usual concerns, and a rich garniture still forms the covering of the insect, whether or no the powerful lens has turned for us the atom into a world, and transformed the almost imperceptible down into the sparkling plumage of the bird of paradise. Thus the wonderful things are already in the Bible. The Spirit who indited them at first brings them not as new revelations to the individual; but, by removing the mists of carnal prejudice, by taking away the scales of pride and self sufficiency, and by rectifying the will, which causes the judgment to look at truth through a distorted medium, -- by influencing the heart, so that the affections shall no longer blind the understanding, -- by these and other modes, which might be easily enumerated, the Holy Ghost enables men to recognize what is hid, to perceive beauty and to discover splendour where all before had appeared without form and comeliness; and thus brings round the result of the Bible, in putting on the lip the wonderful prayer which he had himself inspired: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Henry Melvill, 1798- 1871.

Verse 18. *The wondrous things seem to be the great things of an eternal world -- he had turned his enquiring eyes upon the wonders of nature, sun, moon, and stars, mountains, trees, and rivers. He had seen many of the wonders of art; but now, he wanted to see the spiritual wonders contained in the Bible. He wanted to know about God himself in all his majesty, purity, and grace. He wanted to learn the way of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, and the glory that is to follow.*

Open mine eyes. -- David was not blind -- his eye was not dim. He could read the Bible from end to end, and yet he felt that he needed more light. He felt that he needed to see deeper, to have the eyes of his understanding opened. He felt that if he had nothing but his own eyes and natural

understanding, he would not discover the wonders which he panted to see. He wanted divine teaching -- the eye salve of the Spirit; and therefore he would not open the Bible without this prayer, "Open thou mine eyes." Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.

Verse 18. *Wondrous things.* Wherefore useth he this word "wondrous"? It is as if he would have said, Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and it seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls and young children; yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounts all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets. John Calvin.

Verse 18. *Thy law.* That which is the object of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the Psalmist would be illuminated, is hrwt. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into hrwt, ~ybwtk, and ~yaybg, or the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," [Luke 24:44](#). Under that distribution Torah signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it were usually called "the Law," [Isaiah 8:20](#). By the law, therefore, in this place, the Psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the law, in the Psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditates therein day and night," Ps 1:2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the books thereof in that manner, [Joshua 1:8](#). That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience -- that is, the holy Scripture.

In this law there are twalpg "wonderful things." alp signifies to be "wonderful," to be "hidden," to be "great" and "high;" that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence twalpg are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us as [Deuteronomy 17:8](#), rkr \$mm alpy yk -- "If a matter be too hard for thee," hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are expressed, [Psalms 77:11](#) 78:11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understanding of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is "Wonderful," [Isaiah 9:6](#); for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him. John Owen, 1616-1683.

Verse 18. *Wondrous things.* There are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried, to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some

old baronial estate that has descended to a man (who lives in a modern house) and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till, at last, some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction: he is more and more surprised as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room, and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures on the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titian, there a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah," says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in the castle," and he takes him from room to room and shows carved plate, and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it." But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues as adorn its apartments. It contains treasures that silver, and gold, and precious stones are not to be mentioned with. Henry Ward Beecher, 1872.

Verse 18. *That I may behold wondrous things.* The great end of the Word of God in the Psalmist's time, as now, was practical; but there is a secondary use here referred to, which is worthy of consideration, -- its power of meeting man's faculty of wonder. God knows our frame, for he made it, and he must have adapted the Bible to all its parts. If we can show this, it may be another token that the book comes from Him who made man... That God has bestowed upon man the faculty of wonder we all know. It is one of the first and most constant emotions in our nature. We can see this in children, and in all whose feelings are still fresh and natural. It is the parent of the desire to know, and all through life it is urging men to enquire. John Ker.

Verse 18. *Wondrous things out of thy law.* In 118 we had the "wondrous" character of redemption; in 119 we have the "wonders" ([Psalms 119:18,27,129](#)), of God's revelation. William Kay, 1871.

Verse 18-19. *When I cannot have Moses to tell me the meaning,* saith Saint Augustine, give me that Spirit that thou gavest to Moses. And this is that which every man that will understand must pray for: this David prayed for; -- Open thou mine eyes that I may see the wonders of the Law; and ([Psalms 119:19](#)) hide not thy commandments from me. And Christ saith, "If you, being evil, can give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" so that then we shall see the secrets of God. Richard Stock, (1626).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 18. --

1. The precious casket: "thy law."

2. The invisible treasure: "wondrous things."
3. The miraculous eyesight: "that I may behold."
4. The divine oculist: "Open thou mine eyes."

Verse 18. -- The hidden wonders of the gospel. There are many hidden things in nature; many in our fellow men; so there are many in the Bible. The things of the Bible are hidden because of the blindness of Man.

1. The blind man's sorrow: "Open mine eyes." I cannot see. I have eyes and see not. The pain of this conscious blindness when a man really feels it.
2. The blind man's conviction: "That I may behold wondrous," etc. There are wondrous things there to be seen. I am sure of it. There is a wonderful view,
 - a. of sin;
 - (b) of hell, as its desert;
 - (c) of One ready to save;
 - (d) of perfect pardon;
 - (e) of God's love;
 - (f) of all sufficient grace;
 - (g) of heaven.
 1. The blind man's wisdom. The fault is in my eyes, not in thy word. "Open my eyes," and all will be well. The reason for not seeing is because the eyes are blinded by sin. There is nothing wanting in the Bible.
 2. The blind man's prayer: "Open thou mine eyes."
 - (a) I cannot open them.
 - (b) My dearest friends cannot.
 - (c) Only thou canst. "Lord, I pray thee, now open them."
 Many seek to stop such praying. Be like Bartimaeus who "cried so much the more."
 1. The blind man's anticipation: "That I may behold."
 - (a) The joy of a cured blind man when he is about to behold, for the first time, the beauties of nature.
 - (b) The joy of the spiritually healed when they begin "looking unto Jesus."
 - (c) The personal character of the joy: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold." I have hitherto had to see through the eyes of others. I would depend on other eyes no longer.
 The glad anticipation of Job: "Whom I shall see for

myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." --Frederick G. Marchant, 1882.

Verse 18. -- God's word suited to man's sense of wonder.

1. We shall make some remarks on the sense of wonder in man, and what generally excites it. One of the first causes of wonder is the new or unexpected. The second source is to be found in things beautiful and grand. A third source is the mysterious which surrounds man -- there are things unknowable.
2. God has made provision for this sense of wonder in his revealed word. The Bible addresses our sense of wonder by constantly presenting the new and unexpected to us; it sets before us things beautiful and grand. If we come to the third source of wonder, that which raises it to awe, it is the peculiar province of the Bible to deal with this.
3. The means we are to use in order to have God's word thus unfolded -- the prayer of the Psalmist may be our guide -- "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." --John Ker, of Glasgow, 1877.

Verse 18. -- Wondrous sights for opened eyes.

1. The wondrous things in God's law. A wondrous rule of life. A wondrous curse against transgression. A wondrous redemption from the curse shadowed forth in the ceremonial law.
2. Special eyesight needed to behold them. They are spiritual things. Men are spiritually blind. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
3. Personal prayer to the Great Opener of eyes. --C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 19. I am a stranger in the earth. This is meant for a plea. By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The Psalmist was a stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are: he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven.

Therefore he pleads,

Hide not thy commandments from me. If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest? David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to -- understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by

the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case, -- in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend.

This prayer is a supplement to "open thou mine eyes", and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and to plead for it from every point of view.

The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone.

Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave: "Thy word have I hid," "Hide not thy commandments from me." This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding in and hiding from.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth.* David had experience of peace and war, of riches and poverty, of pleasure and woe. He had been a private and public person; a shepherd, a painful calling; a soldier, a bloody trade; a courtier, an honourable slavery, which joins together in one the lord and the parasite, the gentleman and the drudge; and he was a king, -- a glorious name, filled up with fears and cares. All these he had passed through, and found least rest when he was at the highest, less content on the throne than in the sheepfolds. All this he had observed and laid up in his memory, and this his confession is an epitome and brief of all; and in effect he telleth us, that whatsoever he had seen in this his passage, whatsoever he had enjoyed, yet he found nothing so certain as this, -- that he had found nothing certain, nothing that he could abide with or would abide with him, but that he was still as a passenger and "stranger in the earth." Anthony Farindon, 1596-1658.

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth, etc.* As a sojourner, he hath renounced the world, which is therefore become his enemy; as "a stranger" he is fearful of losing his way; on these accounts he requests that God would compensate the loss of earthly comforts by affording the light of heaven; that he would not "hide his commandments," but show and teach him those steps, by which he may ascend toward heaven, rejoicing in hope of future glory. George Horne, 1730-1792.

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth.* This confession from a solitary wanderer would have had little comparative meaning; but in the mouth of one who was probably surrounded with every source of worldly enjoyment, it shows at once the vanity of "earth's best joys," and the heavenly tendency of the religion of the Bible. Charles Bridges.

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth, etc.*

1. Every man here upon earth (especially a godly man) is but a stranger and a passenger.

2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a better and a more durable state. Every man should do so. A man's greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so. Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other (Colossians 3:2); heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance, that which is taken from the one is put into the other.
3. There is of sufficient direction how to obtain this durable estate, but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: "Life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but as it is brought to light with most clearness in the word, so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God makes us wise to salvation, and which is our line and rule to heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state to consult with the word.
4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till God enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveys influence into our hearts. This is the light David begs when he says, "Hide not thy commandments from me." David was not ignorant of the Ten Commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use.
5. If we would have the Spirit we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the "Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13); and therefore we must say, as David, "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles" (Psalms 43:33). Thomas Manton.

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth*, etc. When a child is born, it is spoken of sometimes under the designation of "a little stranger!" Friends calling will ask if, as a privilege, they may "see the little stranger." A stranger, indeed! come from far. From the immensities. From the presence, and touch, and being of God! And going -- into the immensities again -- into, and through all the unreckonable ages of duration.

But the little stranger grows, and in a while begins to take vigorous root. He works, and wins, and builds, and plants, and buys, and holds, and, in his own feeling, becomes so "settled" that he would be almost amused with anyone who should describe him as a stranger now.

And still life goes on, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught by these -- like a ship, from which

many anchors are cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honour, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns; multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then -- just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great restful, sunny plain -- lo! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. The voice, which, soon or late, everyone must hear, is calling for "the little stranger," who was born not long ago, whose first lesson is over, and who is wanted now to enter by the door called death, into another school. And the stranger is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is settled. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen," and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are seen" are temporal, and go with time into extinction; while "those which are not seen, are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. Now, all this may be obviated and escaped, thoroughly, if a man will but say -- I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me. Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary, and other Meditations." 1872.

Verse 19. *I am a stranger in the earth*, etc. In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the arguments to him, to persuade him to deal kindly with him. Robert Leighton, 1611-1684.

Verse 19. *In the earth*. He makes no exception here; the whole earth he acknowledged a place of his pilgrimage. Not only when he was banished among the Moabites and Philistines was he a stranger; but even when he lived peaceably at home in Canaan, still he thinks himself a stranger. This consideration moved godly Basil to despise the threatening of Modestus, the deputy of Valens the emperor, when he braved him with banishment. *Ab exilii metu liber sum, unam hominum cognoscens esse patram, paradisum omnem autem terram commune naturae exilium.* And it shall move us to keep spiritual sobriety in the midst of pleasures, if we remember that in our houses, at our own fireside, and in our own beds, we are but strangers, from which we must shortly remove, to give place to others. William Cowper.

Verse 19. *Hide not thy commandments from me*. The manner of David's reasoning is this. I am here a stranger and I know not the way, therefore, Lord, direct me. The similitude is taken from passengers, who coming to an uncouth country where they are ignorant of the way, seek the benefit of a guide. But the dissimilitude is here: in any country people can guide a stranger to the place where he would be; but the dwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven; and therefore

David seeks no guide among them, but prays the Lord to direct him. William Cowper.

Verse 19. *Hide not thy commandments from me.* There is a hiding of the word of God when means to hear it explained by preachers are wanting; and there is a hiding of the comfortable and lively light of the Spirit, who must quicken the word into us. From both those evils we may, and we should, pray to be saved. David Dickson.

EXPOSITION

Verse 20. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense, -- they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings.

God's judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question. The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal.

"This is the Judge which ends the strife

Where wit and reason fail;

Our guide through devious paths of life,

Our shield when doubts assail." Watts.

David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough.

Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant; we should feel holy longings "at all times." Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name, -- they are temporary emotions born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times.

Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. "My soul

breaketh"; "my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the psalmist was so careful in composing.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 20. *My soul breaketh*, etc. Here is a protestation of that earnest desire he had to the obedience of the word of God; he amplifies it two ways: first, it was no light motion, but such as being deeply rooted made his heart to break when he saw that he could not do in the obedience thereof what he would. Next, it was no vanishing motion, like the morning dew; but it was permanent, omni tempore, he had it at all times. William Cowper.

Verse 20. *My soul breaketh for the longing*, as one that with straining breaks a vein. William Gurnall.

Verse 20. *My soul breaketh*, etc. This breaking is by rubbing, chafing, or crushing. The spirit was so fretted with its yearning desire after the things which Jehovah had spoken, that it was broken as by heavy friction. The "longing" to find out and follow the hidden wonders was almost unbearable. This longing continued with the Psalmist "at all times," or "in every season." Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that longing. "The wondrous things" were so wonderful, and still so hidden. To see a little of "the beauty of the Lord" is to get to know how much there is which we fail to see, and thus to long more than ever. He who pursues ardently the wonders of the word of the Lord, will never set that longing at rest as long as he remains "in the earth." It is only when we shall "be like him," and "shall see him as he is," that we shall cry, "Enough, Lord!" "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." F. G. Marchant.

Verse 20. *My soul breaketh for the longing*. For the earnest desire. "That it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful, or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the wants of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with all that there is in the law of God. Albert Barnes.

Verse 20. *My soul breaketh for the longing*, etc. The desire after God's appointments becomes painfully intense. A longing -- an intense longing -- for the judgments of the Lord -- at all times. These are the particulars of his breaking soul. His whole mind is toward the things of God. He prays that he may behold the wondrous things of Jehovah's law, and that he may not hide his commandments from him; and here his soul breaks for longing towards his judgments at all times. The state of the Psalmist's mind would not lead us here to suppose that he was awaiting the manifestation of the Lord's judgments in vindicating his cause against ungodly men, or that he was longing for opportunity of fulfilling all the deeds of righteousness towards his fellow men; for this he was doing to the utmost. Evidently he is intent upon the ordinances of religion, which were called "judgments" in reference to

the solemn sanctions with which they were enjoined. The man of God so longed to join with the Lord's people in these, that his heart was ready to break with desire, as he was forced from place to place in the wilderness. The renewed heart is here. Another might long to be delivered from persecution, to be at rest, to be restored to home, relations, and comfort. The man of God could not but desire those natural enjoyments; but, over all, his holy mind longed with ardour for the celebration of Jehovah's worship. John Stephen.

Verse 20. *Thy judgments.* God's judgments are of two sorts: first, his commands; so called because by them right is judged and discerned from wrong. Next, his plagues executed upon transgressors according to his word. David here refers to the first. Let men who have not the like of David's desire, remember, that they whose heart cannot break for transgressing God's word because they love it, shall find the plagues of God to bruise their body and break their heart also. Let us delight in the first sort of these judgments, and the second shall never come upon us. William Cowper.

Verse 20. *Mark that word,* at all times. Bad men have their good moods, as good men have their bad moods. A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times. Thomas Brooks, 1608-1680.

Verse 20. *At all times.* Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comfort to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease, they despise it. But David made use of it "at all times;" in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair; in affliction, the word was his cordial; in worldly increase, it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another. Thomas Manton.

Verse 20. *At all times.* How few are there even among the servants of God who know anything of the intense feeling of devotion here expressed! O that our cold and stubborn hearts were warmed and subdued by divine grace, that we might be ready to faint by reason of the longing which we had "at all times" for the judgments of our God. How fitful are our best feelings! If today we ascend the mount of communion with God, tomorrow we are in danger of being again entangled with the things of earth. How happy are they whose hearts are "at all times" filled with longings after fellowship with the great and glorious object of their love! John Morison, 1829.

Verse 20. *If you read the lives of good men,* who have been, also, intellectually great, you will be struck, I think, even to surprise, a surprise, however, which will not be unpleasant, to find them, at the close of life, in their own estimation so ignorant, so utterly imperfect, so little the better of the long life lesson. Dr. Chalmers, after kindling churches and arousing nations to their duties, summed up his own attainments in the word "desirousness," and took as the text that best described his inner state,

that passionate, almost painful cry of David, My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments. But how grand was the attainment! To be in old age as simple as a little child before God! To be still learning at threescore years and ten! How beautiful seem the great men in their simplicity! Alexander Raleigh, in "The Little Sanctuary," 1872.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 20. --

1. The word sought, and sought at all times.
2. The word sought, and sought with intense desire.
3. The word sought, and sought the more intensely the more it is found. It was because he had found so much in the word of the Lord already, that the soul of the Psalmist was breaking to find more. Those who have been once admitted to "the secret of the Lord" find their highest joy in knowing that secret still more fully. It is to those who know that secret that the promise is given: "He will show them his covenant:" Psalms 25:14. -- F.G.M.

Verse 20. -- One of the best tests of character and prophecies of what a man will be, are his longings.

1. The saint's absorbing object: "Thy judgments." The word here is synonymous with the "word" of God.
 - a. The Psalmist greatly revered the word.
 - (b) He intensely desired to know its contents.
 - (c) He wishes to feed upon God's word.
 - (d) He longed to obey it.
 - (e) He longed to feel the power of God's judgments in his own heart.
 1. The saint's ardent longings.
 - (a) They constitute a living experience.
 - (b) The expression used in the text represents a humble sense of imperfection.
 - (c) It indicates an advanced experience.
 - (d) It is an experience which we may term a bitter sweet.
 - (e) These longings may become very wearying to a man's soul.
 1. Cheering reflections.
 - (a) God is at work in your soul.
 - (b) The result of God's work is very precious.
 - (c) It is leading on to something more precious.

(d) The desire itself is doing you good.

(e) It makes Christ precious. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1586: "Holy Longings."

EXPOSITION

Verse 21. Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed. This is one of God's judgments: he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea "In the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the naughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. Proud men are cursed men: nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves. In itself, pride is a plague and torment. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

Which do err from thy commandments. Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient.

God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively levelled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils.

In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth," and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.* If the proud escape here, as sometimes they do, hereafter they shall not; for, "the proud man is an abomination to the Lord"; [Proverbs 16:5](#). God cannot endure him; [Psalms 101:5](#). And what of that? Tu perdes superbos, Thou shalt destroy the

proud. The very heathens devised the proud giants struck with thunder from heaven. And if God spared not the angels, whom he placed in the highest heavens, but for their pride threw them down headlong to the nethermost hell, how much less shall he spare the proud dust and ashes of the sons of men, but shall cast them from the height of their earthly altitude to the bottom of that infernal dungeon! "Humility makes men angels; pride makes angels devils;" as that father said: I may well add, makes devils of men. Alazoneiaj outij ekfeugei dikhn, says the heathen poet, Menander; "Never soul escaped the revenge of pride," never shall escape it. So sure as God is just, pride shall not go unpunished. I know now we are all ready to call for a bason, with Pilate, and to wash our hands from this foul sin. Honourable and beloved, this vice is a close one; it will cleave fast to you; yea, so close that ye can hardly discern it from a piece of yourselves: this is it that aggravates the danger of it. For, as Aquinas notes well, some sins are more dangerous propter vehementiam impugnationis, "for the fury of their assault"; as the sin of anger: others for their correspondence to nature; as the sins of lust: other, propter latentiam sui, "for their close skulking" in our bosom; as the sin of pride. Oh, let us look seriously into the corners of our false hearts, even with the lanthorn of God's law, and find out this subtle devil; and never give peace to our souls till we have dispossessed him. Down with your proud plumes, O ye glorious peacocks of the world: look upon your black legs, and your snake like head: be ashamed of your miserable infirmities: else, God will down with them and yourselves in a fearful vengeance. There is not the holiest of us but is this way faulty: oh, let us be humbled by our repentance, that we may not be brought down to everlasting confusion: let us be cast down upon our knees, that we may not be cast down upon our faces. For God will make good his own word, one way; "A man's pride shall bring him low." Joseph Hall, 1574- 1656.

Verse 21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud.* Let the histories of Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod, exhibit the proud under the rebuke and curse of God. He abhors their persons and their offerings: he "knows them afar off": he "resisteth them": "he scattereth them in the imaginations of their hearts." Yet more especially hateful are they in his sight, when cloaking themselves under a spiritual garb, -- "which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." David and Hezekiah are instructive beacons in the church, that God's people, whenever they give place to the workings of a proud heart, must not hope to escape his rebuke. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions:" Psalms 99:8. Charles Bridges.

Verse 21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud.* David addeth another reason whereby he is more enflamed to pray unto God and to address himself unto him to be taught in his word; to wit, when he seeth that he hath so, "rebuked the proud." For the chastisement and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious should be a good instruction for us; as it is said that God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness. It is not without cause

that the prophet Isaiah also hath so said; for he signifieth unto us that God hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, alas, we shall soon become like unto brute beasts: if God lay the bridle on our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully. John Calvin.

Verse 21. *The proud.* This is a style commonly given to the wicked; because as it is our oldest evil, so is it the strongest and first that strives in our corrupt nature to carry men to transgress the bounds appointed by the Lord. From the time that pride entered into Adam's heart, that he would be higher than God had made him, he spared not to eat of the forbidden tree. And what else is the cause of all transgression, but that man's ignorant pride will have his will preferred to the will of God. William Cowper.

Verse 21. *The proud.* Peter speaks of the proud, as if they did challenge God like champions, and provoke him like rebels, so that unless he did resist them, they would go about to deprive him of his rule, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram undermined Moses. Nu 16:1-33.

For so the proud man saith, I will be like the highest, Isaiah 14:12-15, and, if he could, above the highest too. This is the creature that was taken out of the dust, Genesis 2:7, and so soon as he was made, he opposed himself against that majesty which the angels adore, the thrones worship, the devils fear, and the heavens obey. How many sins are in this sinful world! and yet, as Solomon saith of the good wife, Proverbs 31:29, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but you surmount them all"; so may I say of pride, many sins have done wickedly, but you surmount them all; for the wrathful man, the prodigal man, the lascivious man, the surfeiting man, the slothful man, is rather an enemy to himself than to God; but the proud man sets himself against God, because he doth against his laws; he maketh himself equal with God, because he doth all without God, and craves no help of him; he exalteth himself above God, because he will have his own will though it be contrary to God's will. As the humble man saith, Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory, Psalms 115:1; so the proud man saith, Not unto Him, not unto Him, but unto us give the glory. Like unto Herod which took the name of God, and was honoured of all but the worms, and they showed that he was not a god, but a man, Acts 12:21. Therefore proud men may be called God's enemies, because as the covetous pull riches from men, so the proud pull honour from God. Beside, the proud man hath no cause to be proud, as other sinners have; the covetous for riches, the ambitious for honour, the voluptuous for pleasure, the envious for wrong, the slothful for ease; but the proud man hath no cause to be proud, but pride itself, which saith, like Pharaoh, "I will not obey," Ex 5:2. Henry Smith, 1560-1591.

Verse 21. *Proud that are cursed.* -- Proud men endure the curse of never having friends; not in

prosperity, because they know nobody; not in adversity, because then nobody knows them. John Whitecross, in "Anecdotes illustrative of the Old Testament."

Verse 21. *This use of God's judgments upon others must we make to ourselves; first, that we may be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so may fear; and, next, that we may so behold his justice upon the proud that we may have assurance of his mercy to the humble. This is hard to flesh and blood; for some can be brought to rejoice at the destruction of others, and cannot fear; and others, when they are made to fear, cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments.* Richard Greenham.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 21. --

1. The character of the proud.
2. God's dealings with them.
3. Our own relation to them.

Verse 21. --

1. The sin; "Err from the commandments."

(a) By neglect; or,

(b) By abuse of them.

1. Its origin -- pride: pride of reason, of heart, of life.
2. Its punishment.

(a) Rebuke.

(b) Condemnation. --G.R.

EXPOSITION

Verse 22. Remove from me reproach and contempt. These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction. No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation," is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem, "a good name is better than precious ointment." The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth. God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause.

For I have kept thy testimonies. Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a locus standi in the court and cannot be refused. If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right. God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord.

This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to Psalms 119:6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies," by which it chimes with Psalms 119:14.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt.* Here David prays against the reproach and contempt of men; that they might be removed, or, as the word is, rolled from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned: some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean, others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of. It intimates, that this burden lay heavy upon him. Hard words indeed and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit: therefore David prays, Lord, "remove" them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from any duty, or discouraged in it. Matthew Henry

Verse 22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt,* etc. In the words (as in most of the other verses) you have, --

1. A request: Remove from me reproach and contempt.
2. A reason and argument to enforce the request: For I have kept thy testimonies.

First, for the request, Remove from me reproach and contempt; the word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me. And then the argument: for I have kept thy testimonies. The reason may be either thus:

1. He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions.
2. He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause, that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him.
3. It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God's word was not abated by this reproach, he still kept God's testimonies, how wicked soever he did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him, or he pleads that his respect to God and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.

The points from hence are many.

1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God's testimonies should be slandered and reproached.
2. As it is the usual lot of God's people to be reproached; so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear.
3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so may we, with submission to God's will.
4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful asserter of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from the entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology.
5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit; we must plead guilty when, by our own fault, we have given occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so, "Turn away my reproach, which I fear: for thy judgments are good" ([Psalms 119:39](#)). "My reproach," for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbled himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here: "Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good." Thomas Manton.

EXPOSITION

Verse 23. Princes also did sit and speak against me. David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scorner. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him: they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his

thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation. It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all. Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.

Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate," and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to forget it. It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons of affliction.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 23. *Princes also did sit*, under the shadow of justice, and speak against me. Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the taverns and inns, being there blazoned by dissolute jesters and scoffers, and talked of in the streets and market places; but even in the place of justice (which ought to be holy); it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be, as it were, a most wicked and cursed man. When David then did see that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he makes his complaint unto God, and says, "O Lord, the princes and governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me; and yet for all that I have kept thy testimonies." Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so fall out, when we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience? that we are falsely slandered, and accused of this and that whereof we never once thought; yet ought we to bear all things patiently; for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, whatever great protestation of our integrity and purity we may dare to make. John Calvin.

Verse 23 But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. *As husbandmen*, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water furrows to carry it away; so, when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter. But every diversion will not become saints, it must be a holy diversion: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" ([Psalms 94:19](#)). The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his ease in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; "Thy comforts," -- comforts of God's allowance, of God's providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it: but David, who was God's servant, must have God's comforts. So, elsewhere, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked: "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" ([Psalms 73:17](#)).

He goeth to divert his mind by the use of God's ordinances, and so cometh to be settled against the temptation. Thomas Manton.

Verse 23. *But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.* -- Perceive here the armour by which David fights against his enemy. *Arma justi quibus omnes adversariorum repellit impetus*, his weapons are the word and prayer. He renders not injury for injury, reproach for reproach. It is dangerous to fight against Satan or his instruments with their own weapons; for so they shall easily overcome us. Let us fight with the armour of God -- the exercises of the word and prayer: for a man may peaceably rest in his secret chamber, and in these two see the miserable end of all those who are enemies to God's children for God's sake. William Cowper.

Verse 23. *Thy statutes.* It is impossible to live either Christianly or comfortable without the daily use of Scripture. It is absolutely necessary for our direction in all our ways before we begin them, and when we have ended them, for the warrant of our approbation of them, for resolving of our doubts, and comforting us in our griefs. Without it our conscience is a blind guide, and leadeth us in a mist of ignorance, error, and confusion. Therein we hear God speaking to us, declaring his good will to us concerning our salvation, and the way of our obedience to meet him in his good will. What book can we read with such profit and comfort? For matter, it is wisdom: for authority, it is divine and absolute: for majesty, God himself under common words and letters expressing an unspeakable power to stamp our heart. Where shall we find our minds so enlightened, our hearts so deeply affected, our conscience so moved, both for casting us down and raising us up? I cannot find in all the books of the world, such an one speak to me, as in Scripture, with so absolute a conquest of all the powers of my soul.

Contemners of Scripture lack food for their souls, light for their life and weapons for their spiritual warfare; but the lovers of Scripture have all that furniture. Therein we hear the voice of our Beloved, we smell the savour of his ointments, and have daily access unto the art of propitiation. If in our knowledge we desire divinity, excellency, antiquity, and efficiency, we cannot find it, but in God's word alone. It is the extract of heavenly wisdom, which Christ the eternal Word brought out of the bosom of his Father. William Struther, 1633.

Verse 23-24. *The two last verses of this section contain two protestations of David's honest affection to the word.* The first is, that albeit he was persecuted and evil spoken of, and that by great and honourable men of the world, such as Saul, and Abner, and Ahithophel; yet did he still meditate in the statutes of God. It is a hard temptation when the godly are troubled by any wicked men; but much harder when they are troubled by men of honour and authority. And that, first, by reason of their place: the greater power they have, the greater peril to encounter with their displeasure; therefore said Solomon, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death." Next, because authorities and powers are ordained by God, not for the terror of the good, but of the evil: [Romans 13:3](#). And

therefore it is no small grief to the godly, when they find them abused to a contrary end: that where a ruler should be to good men like rain to the fields new mown, he becomes a favourer of evil men and a persecutor of the good. Then justice is turned into wormwood; that which should bring comfort to such as fear God, is abused to oppress them. And therefore it should be accounted a great benefit of God, when he gives a people good and religious rulers. William Cowper.

Verse 23, 51. *If the 119th Psalm came from the pen of David, as multitudes believe, then I do not wonder that many have connected its composition with his residence in the school of the prophets of Naioth. The calm in which he then found himself, and the studies which he then prosecuted, might well have led his musings in the direction of that alphabetic code, while there are in it not a few expressions which, to say the least, may have particular reference to the dangers out of which he had so recently escaped, and by which he was still threatened. Such, for example, are the following: "Princes also did sit and speak against me": but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. "The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law." William M. Taylor, in "David, King of Israel; his Life and its Lessons." 1880.*

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 23. -- Meditation.

1. Our best employment while others slander.
2. Our best comfort under their falsehood.
3. Our best preservative from a spirit of revenge.
4. Our best mode of showing our superiority to their attacks.

EXPOSITION

Verse 24. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. They were not only themes for meditation, but "also" sources of delight and means of guidance. While his enemies took counsel with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not drive the bird from its nest with all their noise. It was their delight to slander and his delight to meditate. The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight, and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them. If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of the Lord than to the false witness of our foes. The best answer to accusing princes is the word of the justifying King.

In Psalms 119:16 David said, "I will delight in thy statutes," and here he says "they are my delight": thus resolutions formed in God's strength come to fruit, and spiritual desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.* His delight and his counsellors, that is, his delight because his counsellors; his counsellors, and therefore his delight. We know how delightful it is to any to have the advantage of good counsel, according to the perplexities and distractions in which they may be. "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel," says Solomon, Proverbs 27:9. Now this is the sweetness of Divine communion, and of meditation on God and his word; it employs a man with seasonable counsel, which is a very great refreshment to us. T. Horton, 1673.

Verse 24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight,* etc. Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight, must make them for their counsellors and be advised by them: and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking, take them for their delight in comfortable walking. Matthew Henry.

Verse 24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.* What could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction David had both these blessings. As the fruit of his "meditation in the Lord's statutes," in his distress they were his "delight"; in his seasons of perplexity they were his "counsellors," directing his behaviour in the perfect way. Charles Bridges.

Verse 24. *My counsellors.* In the Hebrew it is, "the men of my counsel," which is fitly mentioned; for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their Privy Council; a child of God hath also his Privy Council, God's testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and counsellors; on the other side there was David and God's testimonies. Now, who was better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors? answered, "The dead (meaning books), which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth." Now of all such dead counsellors, God's testimonies have the preeminence. A poor, godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate, and his council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and "other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A man so furnished, is never less alone than when alone; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believed or done; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage or dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazard it expose him to. And truly, if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these: "Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel." Thomas Manton.

Verse 24. *My counsellors.* See here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when David calleth the commandments of God his "counsellors." For, in the first place, he meaneth that he might scorn all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, since he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. In the second place, he meaneth that when he shall be so governed

by the word of God, he would not only be truly wise, but that it would be as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea, and a great deal more. John Calvin.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 24. --

1. He revered them as God's testimonies.
2. He revelled in them as his delight.
3. He referred to them as his counsellors.